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FINAL REPORT BY THE EXPERT

Advice case title:

Conservation of biodiversity on the Mura River

Full official name of the advised entity:

Mura Region EGTC

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1 Executive summary

The report was initiated by the Mura Region EGTC¹ with the aim of **providing a fundamental overview of the Hungarian and Croatian environmental regulations affecting the Mura River, examining possible legal obstacles of a cross-border nature and the need for legal harmonisation.**

The main question of the interviews related to the legislative analysis was whether it **is necessary or possible to harmonise the Hungarian and Croatian national regulations** or whether the current regulatory system is sufficient to maintain the conservation of the protected areas.

The interviews covered in particular the following issues:

- a) knowledge of relevant EU, international and national legislation;
- b) the hierarchy of national environmental protection authorities;
- c) cooperation between the authorities of the two countries;
- d) divergences and harmonisation efforts in the environmental and nature protection rules of the two countries concerning the Mura River.

The results of the study are summarised below:

- detailed EU, international and national legislation directly and indirectly addressing environmental and nature conservation issues in the Mura river and its catchment area;
- the multi-level regulation under examination is currently sufficient to maintain and improve the quality and quantity of the areas under examination;
- due to the different levels of protection in Croatia and Hungary, the national regulations are different (Hungarian regulations are stricter);
- there is currently no need for harmonisation between national regulations;
- there is only project-based cooperation between authorities in the two Member States;
- there is currently no common management organisation capable of dealing with the differences arising from different regulations;
- informing society through the authorities is sufficient for the time being.

The results of the analysis partly confirmed the regulatory differences indicated earlier, but **we do not see them as a legal barrier that needs to be addressed**, especially as the feedback from the authorities is that the parallel project-based work in the two Member States - which

¹ The seat of the Hungarian-Croatian organisation is 8864 Tótszerdahely, Kossuth street 83, Hungary.

obviously also qualifies the underlying regulation in their respective countries - is effective and successful. The **authorities in the Member States have recognised** and acknowledged the **regulatory differences** and perceive the resulting barriers to cooperation (see lack of joint management plans), **but are carrying out rehabilitation tasks in their own territory, applying their own regulations, "respecting" the status quo**, thus bypassing the issue of diverging regulations, **without direct cross-border environmental impacts**.

We do not see a need for common legislation at the moment, and feedback suggests that the five-party biosphere reserve is predestined for the coordination management of the area. The question is whether the Mura will receive sufficient emphasis and attention in the Danube-Drava-Mura triple in the future.

2 Description of the obstacle with indication of the legal/administrative provisions causing the obstacle

Mura is a Croatian-Hungarian border river, which was a restricted area for nearly 80 years in the region based on political reasons. On both sides of the river, an untouched diversity of flora and fauna has become established. Several sections of the flood plain are registered as NATURA 2000 areas. The MURA REGION EGTC organisation was established, consisting of HU&HR municipalities in the target area registered due to MURA REGION EGTC project (HUHR/1001/2.1.4/0004). Its creation proves a high level of cooperation between involved municipalities focused on economic development and life quality of the target region through sustainable tourism development. This cross-border area is along Mura and Drava River in Zala, Međimurje & Koprivnica-Križevci County. The cross-border region along the Mura and Drava River has a rich natural heritage connected to the rivers and artificial lakes in the surrounding area. **In the region the value of the environment protection and the importance of preserving the environment in line with sustainability principles is clear for all stakeholders.**

From January 1, 2023, with the accession of Croatia to Schengen Area and with the ports built in previous years, water tourism on the river has been revived and is expected to continue to develop. The situation resulting from the new opportunity also created challenges. It is necessary to examine and harmonise the Croatian and Hungarian environmental legislation, to preserve the biological values of the entire common river section, and to coordinate the development of water tourism.

As a result of historical events, the border of the two countries was the centre line of the Mura riverbed, which sometimes reached the mainland on one side or the other due to the river's capricious flow. Therefore, **the legislative powers of the two countries were transferred to both the right and left banks of the river.** As a result, **the issue of legal harmonisation is particularly important due to the expected increase in human presence.**

This report **aims to provide a fundamental overview of the Hungarian and Croatian environmental legislation affecting the Mura River in** order to identify:

- **whether the two EU Member States need to harmonise their environmental legislation** or whether the relevant EU, international and national legislation is sufficient to maintain the protection of the site,
- **whether there is a joint organisation** capable of carrying out the tasks arising from the above regulations;
- whether a face-to-face meeting is necessary to allow **the Hungarian and Croatian authorities and experts to discuss the legal-administrative issues involved.**

Why is it necessary to address the environmental regulation of the Mura River? To understand this, we briefly present the history of the river and its environment.

The river Mura starts in the Hohe Tauern mountains in Austria, at an altitude of 1764 metres. Its total length is 454 km, of which only the lowest part falls in Hungary. It reaches the country at Kerkaszentkirály, where the left bank is bordered by the Letenye hills, while on the right bank the Mura valley extends to the Dráva, where it flows into the Dráva between Órtilos and Légrád.

The Mura River is rich in flora and fauna, with several protected species of fish, and the birdlife is enriched by the flocks of migratory birds that come to rest here every year on their way to south.

In the past, the river was used for ship mills and ferries, grazing in the meadows on the floodplain, and vineyards on the hills on the left bank.

The river and its surroundings were undisturbed, mainly due to the fact that in the 1950s, because of its border role, access to the area was by permit only. Later, especially because of pollution from factories on the Austrian side, it became known as one of the most polluted border rivers until the 1990s.

Nowadays, polluting plants have been closed down and water quality has improved significantly. In 2007, the Mura Landscape Protection Area was established in the area.² The aim of the protection was to [protect and maintain the natural values and unique habitats of the living water, marsh and floodplain habitats associated with the Mura River and its floodplain, and to preserve the characteristic landscape features.](#)³

The role of the Mura in water tourism is becoming increasingly important. The downside of the surge in visitor numbers is the overuse of the area by humans, which environmental and nature conservation legislation and strict public authorities are trying to contain.

This natural and historical background provides the background for the present report, and in the following chapter **we will review the EU, international law, Hungarian and Croatian regulations in this area.**

² The legal basis of the landscape protection area is the Decree of the Minister of Environment and Water 10/2007 (III.30.) KvVM.

³ Regulation § 3

2.1 European Union

The main relevant EU regulations, in chronological order, are:

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora⁴

The directive aims to **contribute to ensuring biodiversity in** the EU by protecting natural habitats and wild fauna and flora.

The importance of the Directive is that it **has created the so-called Natura 2000 network**, the **largest ecological network in the world, which** has been applied to the Mura river and its environment on both sides. Natura 2000 consists of **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)**, **designated by** EU countries under the Directive, and **Special Protection Areas (SPAs)**, classified under the Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC).

Annexes I and II of the Directive list the habitat types and species that require the designation of Special Areas of Conservation for their protection. Some of these are identified as 'priority' habitats or species threatened with extinction and subject to special rules.

Annex III lists the criteria and process for the identification of Sites of Community Importance and Special Areas of Conservation, which is divided into 3 phases:

- a) using the criteria set out in the annexes, each EU country draws up a **national list of** sites containing natural habitats and wildlife habitats;
- b) on the basis of the national lists and in agreement with the EU countries, the European Commission adopts **the list of sites of Community importance**;
- c) a Site of Community Importance (SCI) **must be designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) by** the EU country concerned within six years of its selection.

Prohibitions have been introduced for animal and plant species listed in **Annex IV** as particularly endangered. In particular, they prohibit

- the deliberate capture or killing of specimens in any form;
- deliberate disturbance of species, especially during mating, breeding, wintering and migration;
- the deliberate destruction or collection of eggs from wild animals;
- damage or destroy breeding or resting sites.

⁴ The Directive came into force on 10 June 1992. EU countries had until 10 June 1994 to transpose it into their national law.

Member States shall establish **a monitoring system** to control the accidental capture and killing of the species listed in Annex IV(a).⁵

Member States **report to** the Commission **every 6 years on the** measures taken, which are combined to produce a **summary report for the** European Union.

93/626/EEC: Council Decision of 25 October 1993 concerning the conclusion of the Convention on Biological Diversity⁶

The decision provides for **the approval by the European Community of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity**, signed in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. It confirms the commitment of EU countries to implement the articles of the Convention.

For more information on the approved convention, see the section on international law.

Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy⁷ (hereafter: WFD)

The WFD **aims to protect and improve water quality**, as the demand for sufficient quantities of good quality water is growing in the European Union due to the high level of water stress.

Since 2000, **the WFD has been the main law for water protection in Europe**. It ensures an integrated approach to water management, respecting the integrity of the whole ecosystem. It sets out rules to halt the deterioration of bodies of water in the European Union⁸ and to achieve the objective of achieving a "good status" for Europe's rivers, lakes and groundwaters by 2015. This includes:

- protecting all forms of water (surface water, groundwater, terrestrial water and transitional water);
- restoring the ecosystems in and around these water bodies;

⁵ See Eionet (European Environment Information and Observation Network), https://www.eionet.europa.eu/login?came_from=/etcs/etc-bd/

⁶ Date of entry into force: 25/10/1993.

⁷ The Directive has been in force since 22 October 2000 and had to be transposed into national law in the EU Member States by 22 December 2003.

⁸ Definitions of it: Article 2, point 10. body of surface water" means a discrete and significant element of surface water such as a lake, a reservoir, a stream, river or canal, part of a stream, river or canal, a transitional water or a stretch of coastal water.

Article 2, point 12. body of groundwater" means a distinct volume of groundwater within an aquifer or aquifers.

- reducing pollution of water bodies;
- ensuring sustainable water use by individuals and businesses.

The WFD includes provisions on deadlines for meeting the objectives of the Directive, exemptions, and annexes detailing monitoring requirements and criteria for assessing the status of water bodies.

As many European river basins are transboundary in nature, successful and effective implementation of the Directive **will require ongoing verification that neighbouring countries are cooperating in the management of the rivers and other water bodies they share.**

The WFD requires Member States to establish and meet **environmental quality standards** for substances of national importance, i.e. **river basin-specific pollutants**, the monitoring of which currently contributes to the assessment of ecological status. The list of priority substances **should be reviewed every 6 years** and updated as necessary.

The implementation of the WFD is supported by two directives:

Directive 2006/118/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration⁹ (hereafter: GWD)

To prevent and control groundwater pollution, the Directive **incorporates monitoring requirements for pollutant trends and quantitative status into the processes.**

Main content elements of the GWD:

- setting criteria for assessing the chemical status of groundwater;
- identify significant and sustained upward or reversing trends in groundwater pollution levels;
- measures to prevent or limit the release of pollutants to groundwater, soil or subsoil through seepage.

⁹ The directive came into force on 16 January 2007 and EU countries had until 16 January 2009 to transpose it into national law.

Directive 2008/105/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on environmental quality standards in the field of water policy, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directives 82/176/EEC, 83/513/EEC, 84/156/EEC, 84/491/EEC, 86/280/EEC and amending Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council¹⁰

The Directive **establishes environmental quality standards (EQS) for the presence in surface waters of certain** substances identified as priority pollutants because of their significant risk to or via the aquatic environment.

EQS standards differ for terrestrial surface waters (rivers and lakes) and other surface waters (transitional, coastal and territorial waters).

Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds¹¹

The directive **aims to protect all wild birds in the EU** by setting rules for their protection, conservation, management and control. The rules also apply to birds, their eggs, nests and habitats.

Main measures of the Directive:

a) Measures for endangered species

EU countries should take the necessary measures to **maintain** bird species populations at or above **levels that meet** ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, taking into account economic and recreational requirements.

b) Measures for all bird species

Measures for all species of birds that are necessary to conserve, maintain or restore adequate habitat diversity and size, such as:

- the creation of protected areas;
- restoring degraded biotopes (habitats) and creating new ones.

c) Special measures

- **for certain species** to ensure their survival and reproduction;

¹⁰ The Directive had to be transposed into national law by 13 July 2010.

¹¹ The Directive has been in force since 15 February 2010. Directive 2009/147/EC codified and replaced Directive 79/409/EEC and its subsequent amendments.

- **classified as special protection areas**, in terms of quantity and size, in order to protect the species living there; these areas are Natura 2000 network, together with special areas of conservation under the Habitats Directive.
- **against destruction and disturbance of habitats in** special areas of conservation where such destruction or disturbance could significantly affect the objectives of the Directive;

Member States must agree to the action plans if they are satisfied that they will not adversely affect national SPAs.

d) *General protection measures*

Prohibited **for all wild bird species** in the European Union, in particular (some exceptions may apply):

- the deliberate killing or capture of wild birds;
- deliberate damage to their nests and eggs;
- keeping birds of species whose hunting is prohibited;

e) *Measures on hunting birds*

Hunting of certain species may be allowed, inter alia, according to the following principles (some exceptions may apply):

- hunting of bird species during the breeding and fledging season is prohibited;
- migratory species are prohibited from being hunted during their return to their breeding grounds; and
- the use of mass or indiscriminate killing of birds is prohibited.

Member States **are required to report every 6 years on** the measures taken under the Directive and their impact. The format of the report is set out in the Commission implementing acts¹². The Commission, with the help of the European Environment Agency¹³, will prepare and publish a comprehensive report every 6 years based on the national reports.

The Directive was amended in 2019 ([Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the alignment of reporting obligations in the field of legislation](#))

¹² These implementing acts are non-legislative acts, applied individually or generally. Typical areas are environment and health protection and taxation. Implementing acts are adopted by the Commission after consulting committees of experts from EU Member States, in accordance with the rules and procedures laid down in Regulation (EU) No 182/2011. The European Parliament and the Council may not oppose the adoption of implementing acts.

See Article 291 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

¹³ See Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the European Environment Agency and the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Codified version)

*related to the environment, and amending Regulations (EC) No 166/2006 and (EU) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directives 2002/49/EC, 2004/35/EC, 2007/2/EC, 2009/147/EC and 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Regulations (EC) No 338/97 and (EC) No 2173/2005, and Council Directive 86/278/EEC*¹⁴. The amendment harmonised and simplified reporting obligations in the field of environmental law.

Regulation (EU) 2021/783 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE), and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 (Text with EEA relevance)¹⁵

The present report does not deal specifically with funding programmes, but it is worth noting that **some of the directives examined above are closely linked to the LIFE programme**, which **is** the only EU programme that specifically supports environmental, nature conservation and climate policy objectives.

A significant part of the LIFE programme budget is related to the *Nature and Biodiversity* sub-programme. The main objective of the sub-programme is to support the implementation of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), as described above, in particular the Natura 2000 network, with particular emphasis on the prioritised action plans of the Member States. In addition, a key objective is to support the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

Under the new rules for the 2021-2027 programme cycle:

- **75% EU funding** is available if the application is aimed solely at conserving priority habitat types or species, and
- **67% EU funding** is available if the proposal clearly focuses on priority habitats or species, bringing about a concrete and direct improvement in their conservation status.¹⁶

¹⁴ The Regulation was to apply from the date of its entry into force, except that Articles 7(2) and (5), 8, 9 and 10 were to apply from 1 January 2020 and Article 1 from 1 January 2022.

¹⁵ The Directive is in force from 1 January 2021. It runs from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2027 with a budget of €5.432 billion.

¹⁶ In October 2023, the new EU co-funded LIFE RESTORE for MDD project along the Mura, Drava and Danube rivers was launched. Its main objective is to combat habitat degradation and ensure the long-term conservation of priority ecosystems in the UNESCO Mura-Drava-Danube Quintilateral Biosphere Reserve.

2.2 International law

In the field of international legal agreements, we will also discuss the Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, in addition to the classic international conventions. **Biosphere Reserves** are not in fact established by an international treaty, yet these too are in line with a number of other international initiatives in terms of their objectives, conservation and maintenance principles, and in many cases the managed areas are also habitats under international conventions. In addition, biosphere reserves are either part of protected areas (e.g. national parks, nature reserves) or are also classified as Natura 2000 sites.

The relevant international legal rules are, in chronological order:

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)¹⁷

The three objectives of the landmark Convention are the **conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources**. Croatia signed the Convention on 11 June 1992 and Hungary¹⁸ deposited its instruments on 13 June 1992.¹⁹

Responsibilities under the Convention for the signatory countries (in addition to the expected performance according to the specific conditions and capabilities of each country):

- **working with other governments and international organisations** to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;
- **developing appropriate strategies** and integrating biodiversity protection into countries' decision-making, comprehensive plans, programmes and policies;
- identifying, monitoring and conserving **biodiversity**.

¹⁷ The *Convention* was open for signature at Rio de Janeiro by all States and regional economic integration organisations from 5 June 1992 until 14 June 1992, and remained open at the United Nations Headquarters in New York until 4 June 1993. The Convention entered into force on 29 December 1993.

¹⁸ The instrument of ratification of the Republic of Hungary was deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 24 February 1994. See also Act LXXXI of 1995 on the proclamation of the Convention on Biological Diversity

¹⁹ Date of notification/deposit:
https://treaties.un.org/Pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=080000028002934a&clang=_en

The administrative body for the implementation of the Convention is the **Global Environment Facility**.²⁰ Its specific role is to provide developed countries with financial resources to help (developing) countries in difficulty to put the Convention into practice.

The Convention of February 2, 1971 on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention)²¹

The Convention is a **foundational treaty considered to be a model for intergovernmental agreements on waterbird habitats**. More than 130 countries have acceded to it, with Hungary signing on 11 April 1979 and Croatia on 19 November 1992. In implementing the Convention, members act to conserve wetlands and aquatic ecosystems at the global level. While the Convention has been successful, experience has shown that **habitat protection alone is not enough, but that the ecosystem itself must be conserved to** support the species that live there.

Hungary and Croatia do not currently have any wetlands under the Ramsar Convention in the study area, but **the ongoing rehabilitation of the Mura's riparian areas, river branches and habitats makes it important to mention this international convention**.

Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes²²

The Convention was intended to ensure that its members **take appropriate measures to prevent, control and reduce any transboundary impacts**. In particular:²³

- a) prevent, control and reduce pollution of waters with transboundary impacts or causing such impacts, preferably at the source of pollution;
- b) ensure the ecologically sound and rational use of border waters;
- c) ensure the reasonable and equitable use of border waters, in particular for activities with transboundary impacts.

²⁰ <https://www.thegef.org>

²¹ Entry into force: 21 December 1975, in accordance with Article 10, Registration at the UN: 17 February 1976, No. 14583, see: <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/legal-affairs/convention-wetlands-international-importance-especially-waterfowl-habitat>, and <https://www.ramsar.org/>

²² Entry into force: 6 October 1996, in accordance with article 26(1), see: https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=XXVII-5&chapter=27&clang=_en

²³ Article 2 1-8.

Principles to be taken into account in the measures:

- a) **the precautionary principle:** prevention should not be hampered by unproven scientific research on the causal link between a hazardous substance and its spillover effects;
- b) **the "polluter pays" principle:** the costs of preventing, controlling and reducing pollution are borne by the polluter;
- c) **foresighted management of water resources:** meeting the needs of the present generation should not compromise the needs of future generations.

Under the Framework Convention, member countries **work together on the** basis of equality and reciprocity **through bilateral and multilateral agreements in** order to develop coordinated policies, programmes and strategies on relevant issues.

Member States may adopt and apply more stringent measures than those laid down in the Convention.

Hungary signed the Convention and deposited its instruments on 18 March 1992 and Croatia on 8 July 1996.²⁴

The Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of the Republic of Croatia on cooperation in the field of water management, signed in Pécs on 10 July 1994²⁵

The provisions of the Convention **cover all management measures on watercourses and their catchment areas forming the common boundary and intersected by the common boundary** which may have an impact on the waters concerned, the relevant hydraulic works and installations from the point of view of water management, in particular:

- a) surface and groundwater resources,
- b) to protect and defend against the effects of possible damage,
- c) protect waters against pollution and protect their habitats,
- d) to assess the environmental impacts of hydraulic engineering interventions,
- e) exchange of views, information and data, research, design, implementation and observation.

The implementation of the tasks arising from the Convention shall be managed by the **Standing Hungarian-Croatian Committee on Water Management.**²⁶

²⁴ The notification of the approval of the Government of the Republic of Hungary was made on 2 September 1994. The Convention entered into force in respect of the Republic of Hungary on the 6th of October 1996. See Government Decree No 130/2000 (VII. 11.) on the proclamation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, signed in Helsinki on 17 March 1992.

²⁵ The exchange of notes concerning the approval was effected on 2 February 1995.

Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of the Republic of Croatia on cooperation in the field of environment protection and nature conservation, signed on 26 January 2006²⁷

The Parties aim to **cooperate in the field of environmental protection and nature conservation in** order to prevent and assess adverse effects on the environment, to promote the sustainable use of natural resources and to develop solutions leading to sustainable improvement of the environment and nature, and to obtain international and EU funding for the implementation of jointly agreed tasks.

Specific areas of cooperation, in particular:

- a) general questions of environmental and nature policy;
- b) monitoring, assessment and comprehensive analysis of environmental and natural conditions, access to environmental information;
- c) environmental security, mutual assistance in the event of incidents with cross-border implications;
- d) protect, enhance and maintain nature and the landscape;
- e) developing direct links between local authorities, institutions and organisations responsible for the environment and nature conservation;
- f) research and development.

The Hungarian-Croatian Joint Committee on Environment and Nature Protection shall be responsible for the implementation of the tasks set out in the Convention.

Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (MDD TBR)

In 2009, Hungary was the only country to submit a nomination to UNESCO for the creation of a new Mura-Drava-Danube biosphere reserve on the Hungarian-Croatian border.²⁸ Three years later, after Croatia's accession, the nomination was approved and the bilateral Croatian-

²⁶ See the Government Decree 127/1996 (VII. 25.) on the proclamation of the Convention between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the Issues of Water Management Cooperation signed in Pécs on 10 July 1994. This Decree entered into force on the day of its publication, but its provisions were applicable from 3 March 1995.

²⁷ The Convention entered into force on the date of receipt of the subsequent diplomatic note of approval (of the two). The Hungarian Party notified the Croatian Party of its approval by note dated 14 September 2006, and the Hungarian Party received the Croatian Party's note of the same date on 10 May 2007. In accordance with Article 10, the Convention entered into force on the date of the notification of the note by the Croatian Party, i.e. 10 May 2007.

²⁸ By the end of the 1980s, 5 biosphere reserves had been designated in Hungary: the Aggtelek, Fertő Lake, Hortobágy, Kiskunság and Pilis biosphere reserves

Hungarian Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (MDDTBR) was established as **Hungary's first transboundary biosphere reserve**. In the year before the approval, the environment ministers of Austria, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Hungary committed themselves in a declaration to establish a five-party biosphere reserve.²⁹ Subsequently, the Parties have established their own national biosphere reserves and adopted them on a country-by-country basis with the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (abbreviated as UNESCO MAB)³⁰ International Co-ordinating Council (abbreviated as MAB ICC).³¹

In 2017-2019, the Austrian-Hungarian Interreg "Coop MDD" project gave a new impetus to the development of the five-lateral biosphere reserve,³² and on 15 September 2021, the UNESCO MAB ICC officially recognized and included the five-lateral Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve³³ in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.³⁴ The **area, known as the Amazon of Europe (AoE), is the largest and most pristine free-flowing water system in Central Europe**, and the slogan of the reserve is "Amazon of Europe. Reconnect with nature."

The MDDTBR formally started its work on 2 December 2021, under the guidance of its Steering Committee³⁵, in the following areas of activity:³⁶

a) *Farming*

Promote environmentally friendly farming practices to prevent emigration, demonstrating that sustainable land use and its products can be a tourist attraction and a livelihood for the inhabitants of the area.

b) *Research*

To support scientific research which helps the management, interventions and decision-making in the biosphere reserve.

c) *Cooperation*

Comparing experiences of nature conservation, management, tourism and related

²⁹ 25 March 2011.

³⁰ <https://www.unesco.org/en/mab>

³¹ <https://en.unesco.org/mab/icc>

³² Links to projects related to the preparation and operation of the Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve

<https://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/coop-mdd>,

<https://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/lifelinemdd> (source: WWF Hungary)

³³ <https://www.unesco.org/en/mab/mura-drava-danube>

³⁴ <https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/wnbr>

³⁵ See last documented SCM: <https://www.interreg-danube.eu/news-and-events/programme-news-and-events/8141>

³⁶ Source : <https://wwf.hu/elo-folyok/mura-drava-duna/>

legislation in each country and **transposing them** into the practices of other participating countries.

d) *Dissemination*

To fill the contact and knowledge gap between the participating countries.

e) *Restoring the flood plain* Reconnecting former tributaries, widening the floodplain, ensuring free flow and lateral movement of rivers.³⁷

³⁷ A brief summary of the LIFE project that has just been launched to support this activity: <https://wwf.hu/mura-drava-duna-20-millio-euro-europa-amazonasnak-ujjalestesere/> (source: WWF Hungary)

2.3 Hungary

The authorities of the Hungarian environmental and nature conservation administration and their hierarchical structure:

- at national level: the Ministry of Agriculture headed by the Minister (including the State Secretariat for the Environment and the Deputy State Secretariat for Nature Protection),³⁸ and the Pest County Government Office (including the National Department for Environment, Nature Protection and Waste Management);
- with territorial jurisdiction: the Pest County Government Office (for the capital Budapest and Pest County), county government offices, the chief notary of the capital, the notary of the settlement municipality.³⁹

The main legislation relevant to the subject of the study:

Act LIII of 1995 on the General Rules for the Protection of the Environment⁴⁰

The **aim of the Act is to establish a harmonious relationship between man and his environment, to ensure a high level of harmonised protection of the environment as a whole and of its elements and processes**, and to ensure sustainable development.⁴¹

The main tasks arising from the law:

- reducing the stress, pressure and pollution of the environment, repairing and restoring the damaged environment;
- to conserve and maintain natural resources, and to manage them rationally, sparingly and in a way that ensures their renewal;
- promoting international environmental cooperation.

The basic principles of environmental protection⁴² are precaution, prevention and restoration, responsibility, cooperation, and information, communication and public awareness.

In accordance with the provisions of the Act, there are **specific laws on**, among other things, water management,⁴³ and the protection of nature and the landscape in order to preserve the diversity of wildlife and habitats.⁴⁴

³⁸ See AM Instruction 10/2019 (XII. 30.) on the Organisational and Operational Rules of the Ministry of Agriculture

³⁹ See Decree 625/2022 (XII. 30.) of the Government on the designation of bodies performing nature conservation authority and administrative tasks

⁴⁰ The Act entered into force on the 180th day after its publication. Published on 22 June 1995.

⁴¹ See § 1.

⁴² 6. § - 11. §

Act LIII of 1996 on the Protection of Nature⁴⁵

The **purpose of** the law

- a) promoting the protection, knowledge and sustainable use of natural values and areas, biodiversity in general; and
- b) meeting society's need for healthy, aesthetic nature; and
- c) preserving the traditions of nature conservation and developing its results;
- d) priority protection, maintenance and development of natural values and areas.⁴⁶

The objectives are implemented under the guidance of the **Deputy State Secretariat for Nature Protection**. The operational tasks of the management body include the drafting of legislation, the preparation of strategies, the professional management of nature conservation authorities and national park directorates, the coordination of the implementation of international nature conservation conventions, the publication of nature conservation technical material and guidelines, and, in the case of certain priority issues (e.g. CITES procedures)⁴⁷, the performance of official tasks.

For matters not covered by the Nature Conservation Act but related to it, the Act on the General Rules for the Protection of the Environment shall be applied **as background legislation**.

275/2004 (X. 8.) of the Government Decree on sites of European Community importance for nature conservation⁴⁸

The purpose of the Regulation is to lay down the necessary standards for the conservation of habitats of Community importance and species occurring in **Natura 2000 sites**, which are part of the network of sites of Community importance for nature conservation.

⁴³ Article 3 (1) (l)

⁴⁴ Article 3 (2) (a)

⁴⁵ The law entered into force on 1 January 1997. Published 3 July 1996.

⁴⁶ 1. §

⁴⁷ Based on the Ministry of Agriculture's Instruction 10/2019 (XII. 30.) AM on the Ministry of Agriculture's Rules of Organisation and Operation.

⁴⁸ The Regulation entered into force on the 8th day following its publication.

10/2007 (III. 30.) KvVM Decree on the establishment of the Mura Landscape Protection Area⁴⁹

The Decree was issued by the Minister of Environment and Water Management, in agreement with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, on the basis of the authorisation in Act LIII of 1996 on the Protection of Nature.

The purpose of the protection is to protect and maintain the natural values and unique communities of the living water, marsh and floodplain habitats associated with the Mura River and its floodplain, and to preserve the characteristic landscape features.

The protected area covered 1904.1 hectares and the specially protected area covered 106.9 hectares.

The body responsible for the nature conservation management of the Mura Landscape Protection Area is the Balaton National Park Directorate, which carries out certain activities according to a management plan, while in the case of forests, it carries out activities in cooperation with forest managers according to a separate law.

⁴⁹ The Regulation entered into force on the 8th day following its publication.

2.4 Croatia

The authorities of the Croatian Environmental Administration and their hierarchical structure are as follows:

- national jurisdiction: Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Directorate for Nature Protection;
- with territorial jurisdiction: the Muraköz Nature and Nature Conservation Public Institution, the Kapronca-Körös County Nature Conservation Public Institution.

The main legislation covered by the study:

Law on the Protection of Nature (NN 80/13, 15/18, 14/19, 127/19)⁵⁰

According to the law, the aims and tasks of Croatian nature conservation include:⁵¹

- conserve and/or restore biodiversity, landscape diversity and geodiversity;
- to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources without causing significant damage, only by disturbing the balance where necessary;
- contribute to the preservation of the naturalness of the soil, the quality, quantity and availability of water and the sea,
- for the preservation of the atmosphere and the production of oxygen and the climate;
- preventing or mitigating adverse effects on human health resulting from technological progress and the conduct of the activity.

The protection and conservation of Croatian nature is based on the following principles:⁵²

- everyone should contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, landscape diversity and geodiversity;
- non-renewable natural resources must be used rationally, renewable natural resources sustainably;
- everyone must cooperate to prevent, avoid, prevent the occurrence of dangerous acts and damage, and to prevent and remedy the consequences of damage;
- the public has the right to free access to information on the state of nature.

The basic documents for nature conservation in the Republic of Croatia are the Nature Conservation Strategy and Action Plan, which is based on the Report on the Natural Situation

⁵⁰ Effective from 04.01.2020.

⁵¹ Article 4

⁵² Article 5

of the Republic of Croatia and sets out the long-term goals and guidelines for the conservation of biodiversity and geodiversity, and the way of implementation.⁵³

Certain **levels of protection and their sources of law**:

- a) national park and nature park: by law,⁵⁴
- b) regional park, area of special landscape conservation interest: with the prior agreement of the central state administration by the municipality,
- c) natural monument, park forest and park architectural monument: by a regional municipality with the prior consent of a central state administration.

Regulation on Strictly Protected Species (OG 144/13)⁵⁵

The Regulation **declares certain species as strictly protected**, provides for derogations from strict protection measures, the detailed content of applications for the issue of permits for dead or injured specimens of species under strict protection, and the procedure for the adoption of a management plan for species under strict protection.

Regulation on habitat types, habitat maps, endangered and rare habitat types and measures for the maintenance of habitat types (Official Gazette 07/06 and 119/09)⁵⁶

The Regulation **specifies the types of habitats**, the form and content of the habitat map, the way it is used, the types of endangered and rare habitats that need to be conserved and the measures to be taken to conserve endangered and rare habitat types.

The habitat types defined in the Regulation are harmonised with the corresponding European habitat type classifications and designations.

Decree on the ecological network and the competence of public bodies managing ecological network areas (Official Gazette 80/19)⁵⁷

The Regulation **establishes a list of species and habitat types for the conservation of which ecological network areas need to be defined** (reference list of species and habitats), including priority wildlife species and priority natural habitat types, and expert criteria for the isolation of

⁵³ Article 10

⁵⁴ Article 123

⁵⁵ Signed in Zagreb, 22 November 2013.

⁵⁶ Signed in Zagreb, 12 December 2005.

⁵⁷ Signed in Zagreb, 22 August 2019.

wild species and their habitats of importance for the European Union at the level of biogeographical regions. The regulation also defines the **responsibilities of public bodies** managing protected areas and ecological network sites for the preparation of ecological network management plans.

Regulation on the assessment of the acceptability of the ecological network (Official Gazette 146/14)⁵⁸

The Regulation lays down

- the content of the request **for a** preliminary assessment and a main assessment of the **intervention in** the ecological network;
- the detailed content of the request for ex-ante evaluation of the **strategy, plan and programme for** the ecological network, and
- how to inform and involve the **public, and**
- **a list of habitat types and species of** particular threat or importance.

Strategy and Action Plan for the Protection of Biological and Landscape Diversity of the Republic of Croatia for the period 2017-2025 (Official Gazette 72/17)⁵⁹

The **Strategy and Action Plan for the** Protection of Biological and Landscape Diversity of the Republic of Croatia is the **fundamental document for nature protection**, which sets long-term goals and guidelines for the conservation of biological and landscape diversity and protected natural values, as well as the means for their implementation, in line with economic, social and cultural development. The strategy is based on the State of Nature and Nature Conservation Report.

The obligation to draw up a strategy and action plan is laid down in Article 151 of the Nature Conservation Act, along the following lines:

1. increase the effectiveness of the basic mechanisms of nature conservation;
2. reduce direct pressures on nature and promote the sustainable use of natural resources;
3. strengthen the capacity of the nature conservation system;
4. increase the availability of nature-related knowledge and data;
5. increase understanding and support for nature conservation in society.

⁵⁸ Signed in Zagreb, 24 November 2014.

⁵⁹ Signed in Zagreb, 7 July 2017.

Decree on the objectives and conservation measures for the protection of bird species in the ecological network (Official Gazette 25/20)⁶⁰

The Regulation lays down **conservation objectives and conservation measures for target bird species** in the areas of the ecological network and the **way in which conservation measures are implemented**. The conservation objective is to conserve a protected area of importance for the bird in order to enhance the conservation of the species at national, biogeographical and European level.

2.5 Summary of interview results

In addition to examining the regulations presented, the report was prepared through **telephone and written (via email) interviews** with Hungarian and Croatian environmental experts and representatives of environmental authorities. The interviews covered a range of topics, depending on the position and knowledge of the interviewee, but the following themes were raised in all interviews:

- a) knowledge and application of relevant EU, international and national legislation;
- b) the structure of the relevant national hierarchies of authorities;
- c) cooperation between the authorities of the two countries;
- d) divergences and harmonisation efforts in the environmental and nature protection rules of the two countries concerning the Mura River.

The responses received are summarised below:

Topics	Hungary	Croatia
Applied (and background) EU legislation	Known to both parties (see details in the report)	
Applied international law agreement between Hungary and Croatia	Known to both parties (see details in the report)	
Applicable national environmental/nature protection legislation, national authorities concerned	Both parties mentioned primarily the national law on nature conservation and described in detail the current hierarchy of national authorities.	
Cooperation with the national authorities of the other country	Only in the context of specific projects (e.g. Interreg Cross-border Cooperation Programme Hungary-Croatia Programming Committee 2021-2027)	
Ongoing legislative changes affecting the operation of the	No comments on amendments were received.	

⁶⁰ Signed in Zagreb, 24 February 2020.

Topics	Hungary	Croatia
area under review		
The main protection levels for the Mura River, together and on the Hungarian and Croatian sides	Biosphere Reserve (MDDTBR)	
	Natura 2000 sites	
	Balaton-Highlands National Park, Mura Landscape Protection Area	Mura-Drava Regional Park, "Ornithological Reserve Veliki Pažut" ⁶¹
Harmonisation of national legislation between Hungary and Croatia	<p>1) The basic national rules are drafted in the light of EU rules and are therefore harmonised in this respect.</p> <p>2) However, there is a difference in day-to-day operations, due to the different level of protection of Hungarian and Croatian territories. The Croatian side is characterised by the more relaxed rules of the "EU" Natura 200 sites and the "regional park", while the Hungarian side is characterised by the stricter rules resulting from the national park and landscape protection area classification.</p> <p>Some examples of discrepancies:</p> <p>aa) where a site has no other level of protection than Natura 2000, there is no other legal record of the site on the title deed;</p> <p>ab) where the site is classified under a more restrictive legal classification, there may be several protected legal features in addition to Natura 2000 (e.g. specially protected natural area, protected natural area of local importance, ecological corridor, cave surface protection zone), and these almost always impose severe restrictions on the management of the site;</p> <p>ba) in relation to Natura 2000 sites, most activities are not prohibited in principle, but require a permit (e.g. construction, sporting event), which must be obtained from the nature conservation authority, showing the likely impact of the specific activity on the site;</p> <p>bb) the protection of strictly regulated areas is essentially based on prohibitions and restrictions, but there are also activities (e.g. grazing, irrigation, mowing, fishing, sporting events) that can be carried out subject to a permit from the nature conservation authority.</p> <p>ca) In the case of Natura 2000 network sites, the "normal" public pre-emption right applies;</p> <p>cb) in the case of other registered protected legal entities, in the case of a sale of land, there may be several rights of first refusal</p>	

⁶¹ <http://www.amazon-of-europe.com/en/ornithological-reserve-veliki-pazut/>

Topics	Hungary	Croatia
	<p>(e.g. the competent national park authority and, in the case of local protection, the local municipality also have rights of first refusal);</p> <p>da) the market value of the Natura 2000 site is not or only slightly reduced (the available EU and national compensatory allowances maintain its market value);</p> <p>db) the market value of land subject to other legal restrictions is typically lower than the average market price (see the narrower management options due to restrictions).</p> <p>ea) on the Croatian side, Natura 2000 sites are "simply" managed for nature conservation, the ranger network is not known;</p> <p>eb) on the Hungarian side, in order to guard, protect and prevent damage to protected natural values and areas, there is a ranger network (Nature Conservation Guard Service) equipped with uniforms and service firearms, with extensive law enforcement powers.</p>	
<p>Future joint management organisation for biodiversity in the Mura River</p>	<p>Both parties mentioned the Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, although it was noted that it does not yet have a permanent working body in addition to its steering committee.</p>	
<p>Information for NGOs, businesses (professional, legal, tourism, etc.)</p>	<p>On the websites of the relevant authorities and businesses.</p>	

3 Description of possible solution(s)

3.1 The findings of the investigation

The findings collected during the study can be grouped as follows:

- **detailed EU, international and national legislation** directly and indirectly addressing environmental and nature conservation issues in the Mura river and its catchment area;
- the **multi-level regulation under examination is currently sufficient** for the proper maintenance and development of the areas under examination;
- due to the **different levels of protection in Croatia and Hungary, the** national regulations are different (Hungarian regulations are stricter);
- **there is currently no need for harmonisation** between national regulations;
- there is only **project-based cooperation** between authorities in the two Member States;
- **there is currently no common management organisation** capable of dealing with the differences arising from different regulations;
- informing society **through the authorities** is sufficient for the time being.

3.2 Comments on the individual findings

3.2.1 Regulations with different content⁶²

In the past, the **discrepancies** mainly concerned **border control authorisations for** procedures related to waterborne transport (waterborne tourism). Anyone wishing to carry out a water-tour on the Mura had to obtain a permit from the police in both countries. On the Croatian side, there were strict rules (e.g. no photography and no mooring, except in the case of havaria). These rules were not always enforceable, as the river's erratic bends meant that most hikers had no idea which country's territorial waters they were sailing in or landing in. With Croatia's accession to Schengen, the issue has been resolved.

Currently, there are "other types" of licensed land use on both banks of the river, the difference being that experience shows that the left bank is more intensively used by Croats.⁶³ The content of the permits may differ. For example, many Croatian permits are issued for motorboat traffic,

⁶² Source: Balaton-Highlands National Park Directorate

⁶³ According to information from the Balaton-Highlands National Park Directorate.

which are valid for the entire stretch of the Mura, while Hungarian permits on similar subjects typically only cover certain stretches of the Mura.

Apart from water transport, there is no conflict in the application of nature protection regulations, according to the feedback, both parties are moving in their "own territory", and there are no "common" issues due to the different level of protection in the neighbouring country (e.g. the range of animals that can be hunted is different).

The **divergence is more evident in the joint work on biosphere reserves**, the background reason being that the Hungarian legislation has classified the core area of the biosphere reserve as highly protected.⁶⁴

The highly protected legal nature has led to confusion in cooperation. Thus, when the member countries of the biosphere reserve submitted an application for the development of **a joint management plan**, the strict Hungarian nature conservation regulations were not acceptable to the other countries, while the Hungarian side found the more lenient regulations unacceptable, so as a solution, in the case of the LIFE RESTORE project mentioned in the report, each member country solves its own rehabilitation activities - after preliminary plan coordination and approval - on its own territory, with its own regulations. As these interventions (in this project) do not affect the territory of the neighbouring country, they can operate in parallel, and no cross-border environmental impact can be detected.

3.2.2 Joint management organisation

There are currently three joint organisations that are or could be operational in the area covered by this report.

A) Hungarian-Croatian Joint Committee on Environment and Nature Protection

The Committee is composed of up to seven representatives of the relevant ministries and institutions, plus the heads of the subcommittees. The chairmanship system shall operate in a co-chair format. Subcommittees on Environment and Nature Protection are set up for each theme.

The Commission meets at least once a year, alternating between the two countries. The Commission may invite advisory experts to its meetings. The official languages of the meetings

⁶⁴ Act LIII of 1996, § 29 (1) The Minister may designate a national park, a landscape conservation area, a nature conservation area or a specified part thereof, if it is of internationally outstanding scientific value, as a biosphere reserve in accordance with our international commitments. Within the biosphere reserve, a core area shall be designated for the immediate conservation of the outstanding conservation value.⁶⁴

and minutes shall be Hungarian and Croatian, unless the Parties agree otherwise. The working language for correspondence and contacts between the Commission and its working bodies shall be English.

B) Standing Hungarian-Croatian Committee on Water Management

The Commission consists of six members, one leader (chair), one deputy and one technical secretary per country. The Commission is empowered to draw up common rules (e.g. water damage prevention, ice protection). It must submit bilingual minutes of its meetings to the governments of the member countries for subsequent approval.⁶⁵

The **committees** deal with a single subject area, their terms of reference are laid down in an international convention, so they are **not suitable for overall governance**, although they do have several operational and organisational advantages, such as:

- international treaties legalise them;
- their leaders are appointed by central governments;
- their activities have a relevant, cross-border professional and administrative impact;
- meet systematically, according to an organisational and operational structure;
- are supported by practitioners.

Notwithstanding the above, we consider the work of the committees/subcommittees **as a coordinating body in the** cooperation on the Mura River to be essential, as they are the bodies that are constantly dealing with this area. Thus, for example, one of the tasks of the Nature Protection Subcommittee in 2012 was not only to consider the further work necessary for the operation of the then newly established two-member Hungarian-Croatian Biosphere Reserve, but also to prepare the ground for the establishment of the Hungarian and Croatian Coordination Committees.⁶⁶ The Mura Sub-Committee of the Hungarian-Croatian Standing Committee on Water Management carries out expert reviews of the river every year.

⁶⁵ See the Government Decree 127/1996 (VII. 25.) on the proclamation of the Convention between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the Issues of Water Management Cooperation signed in Pécs on 10 July 1994. This Decree entered into force on the day of its publication, but its provisions were applicable from 3 March 1995.

⁶⁶ <https://termesztvedelem.hu/magyar-horvat-termesztvedelmi-albizottsag-3-talalkozoja>

C) Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (MDDTBR) Steering Committee

The Steering Committee (SCO) is a steering organisation made up of representatives of the members, which for the time being is responsible for coordination and project activities. Its main recurring tasks are discussed at its annual meetings:⁶⁷

- preparing and finalising projects;
- a continuous review of the progress of each project phase;
- discussing the results of the project.

At the time of writing this report, the MDDTBR was the organisation considered by the majority of respondents to be best placed to carry out conservation management activities in the Mura River and its surroundings. However, the MDDTBR does not currently have a permanent working organisation, although there are plans to establish a Joint Secretariat with full-time staff and a budget funded by the member countries. The expected tasks of the Secretariat would be, in particular:

- preparing the tasks of the Biosphere Reserve, preparing reports on their implementation and presenting them at meetings;
- organising and serving meetings;
- cooperation with other relevant international bodies.

We are not yet able to assess the MDDTBR's governance role, as we do not have the necessary and sufficient background information, e.g. the MDDTBR's organisational information was not even available on a public platform at the time of writing. However, it is already clear that the future management organisation will have to develop a transparent and efficient cooperation structure at least within the triple regulatory framework of **biosphere reserve - Natura 2000 - national authorities**, while offering cooperation opportunities to certain stakeholders (county institutions, water management companies, forest management companies, scientific bodies, etc.).

Given the strong presence of national authorities, it is of course possible that the MDDTBR's "umbrella" function may be impeded by the dominance of the regulatory system of national authorities and that the MDDTBR may be left with the project-based joint management function in which it seems to have been successful so far.

In view of the doubts, lack of information, the rudimentary organisational structure of the MDDTBR and, last but not least, the lack of future visions of the member countries, it is proposed that the experts addressed by this report, together with other experts as required, **discuss the details of the harmonisation issues addressed in this report in a workshop.**

Overall, we conclude that the results of the analysis partly confirmed the regulatory differences indicated earlier, but **we do not see them as a legal barrier that needs to be addressed**,

⁶⁷ <https://www.interreg-danube.eu/news-and-events/programme-news-and-events/8141>

especially as the feedback from the authorities is that the parallel project-based work in the two Member States – which obviously also qualifies the underlying regulation in their favour – is effective and successful. The **authorities in the Member States have recognised and acknowledged the regulatory differences and perceive the resulting barriers to cooperation** (see lack of joint management plans), but are carrying out rehabilitation tasks in their own territory, applying their own regulations, “respecting” the status quo, thus bypassing the issue of diverging regulations, without transboundary environmental impacts.

We do not see a need for common legislation at the moment, and feedback suggests that the five-party biosphere reserve is predestined for the coordination management of the area. The question is whether the Mura will receive sufficient emphasis and attention in the Danube-Drava-Mura triple relationship in the future.

4 Organisations, representatives contacted by the CESCO for making interviews and information exchange with them

Organisation	Representatives
Mura Region EGTC (HU)	Dr. Árpád Dezsőné Nagy, head office István Tilki, director
Ministry of Agriculture (HU) Department of Nature Conservation Ecology Department	Dr Andrea Riskó, Head of Department
Ministry of Agriculture (HU) Department of Biodiversity and Gene Conservation Nature Conventions Unit	Levente Kőrösi, Head of Department
WWF Hungary (HU)	Zoltán Barina, project manager
Balaton-Highlands National Park Directorate West-Zala Landscape Region	Máté Magyarai, Head of Department András Lelkes, ranger
Međimurska priroda- Javna ustanova za zaštitu prirode (HR)	mr sc. Siniša Golub, director dr. sc. Mihaela Mesarić, Professional Manager
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (HR) Protected Area Management	Karla Fabrio Čubrić, Head of Department mr sc. Iva Antolić, senior expert advisor

5 A full list of all legal provisions relevant to the case with the correct citation both in original language and in English

Legal provisions of the European Union

Legal provisions	Official Journal
Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora	<i>OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7-50</i>
93/626/EEC: Council Decision of 25 October 1993 concerning the conclusion of the Convention on Biological Diversity	<i>OJ L 309, 13.12.1993, p. 1-2</i>
Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy	<i>OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1-73</i>
Directive 2006/118/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration	<i>OJ L 372, 27.12.2006, p. 19-31</i>
Directive 2008/105/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on environmental quality standards in the field of water policy, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directives 82/176/EEC, 83/513/EEC, 84/156/EEC, 84/491/EEC, 86/280/EEC and amending Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council	<i>OJ L 348, 24.12.2008, p. 84-97</i>
Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the European Environment Agency and the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Codified version)	<i>OJ L 126, 21.5.2009, p. 13-22</i>
Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds	<i>OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7-25</i>
Regulation (EU) 2019/1010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the alignment of reporting obligations in the field of legislation relating to the environment, and amending Regulations (EC) No 166/2006 and (EU) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directives 2002/49/EC, 2004/35/EC, 2007/2/EC, 2009/147/EC and 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Regulations (EC) No 338/97 and (EC) No 2173/2005, and Council Directive 86/278/EEC (Text with EEA relevance)	<i>OJ L 170, 25.6.2019, p. 115-127</i>
Regulation (EU) 2021/783 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE), and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 (Text with EEA relevance)	<i>OJ L 172, 17.5.2021, p. 53-78</i>

International law

In Hungarian	In English
Az 1971. február 2-i egyezmény a nemzetközi jelentőségű vizes élőhelyekről, különösen a vízmadarak élőhelyéről (Ramsari Egyezmény)	The Convention of February 2, 1971 on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention)
Egyezmény (1992. március 17.) a határokon átnyúló vízfolyások és nemzetközi tavak védelméről és használatáról	Convention of March 17, 1992 on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
1992. június 5-i egyezmény a biológiai sokféleségről	Convention of June 5, 1992 on Biological Diversity
A Magyar Köztársaság Kormánya és a Horvát Köztársaság Kormánya között Pécsen, a vízgazdálkodási együttműködés kérdéseiről szóló, 1994. július 10-én aláírt Egyezmény	The Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of the Republic of Croatia on cooperation in the field of water management, signed in Pécs on 10 July 1994
Magyar Köztársaság Kormánya és a Horvát Köztársaság Kormánya között a környezetvédelem és természetvédelem terén való együttműködésről szóló, 2006. január hó 26-án aláírt Egyezmény	Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of the Republic of Croatia on cooperation in the field of environment protection and nature conservation, signed on 26 January 2006
Mura-Dráva-Duna Határon Átnyúló Bioszféra Rezervátum, 2021. szeptember 15.	Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, September 15, 2021

Hungarian legal provisions

In Hungarian	In English
1995. évi LIII. törvény a környezet védelmének általános szabályairól	Act LIII of 1995 on the General Rules for the Protection of the Environment
1995. évi LXXXI. törvény a Biológiai Sokféleség Egyezmény kihirdetéséről	Act LXXXI of 1995 on the Proclamation of the Convention on Biological Diversity
1996. évi LIII. törvény a természet védelméről	Act LIII of 1996 on the Protection of Nature
127/1996. (VII. 25.) Korm. rendeletet a Magyar Köztársaság Kormánya és a Horvát Köztársaság Kormánya között Pécsen, 1994. július 10-én aláírt, a vízgazdálkodási együttműködés kérdéseiről szóló egyezmény kihirdetéséről.	Government Decree 127/1996 (VII. 25.) on the proclamation of the Convention between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of the Republic of Croatia on water management cooperation signed in Pécs on 10 July 1994.
130/2000. (VII. 11.) Korm. rendelet a határokat átlépő vízfolyások és nemzetközi tavak védelmére és használatára vonatkozó, Helsinkiben, 1992. március 17-én aláírt Egyezmény kihirdetéséről.	Government Decree 130/2000 (VII. 11.) on the proclamation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, signed in Helsinki on 17 March 1992.

In Hungarian	In English
Agrárminisztérium Szervezeti és Működési Szabályzatáról szóló 10/2019. (XII. 30.) AM utasítás	Ministry of Agriculture Instruction 10/2019 (XII. 30.) AM on the Organisational and Operational Rules of the Ministry of Agriculture
275/2004. (X. 8.) Korm. rendelet az európai közösségi jelentőségű természetvédelmi rendeltetésű területekről	275/2004 (X. 8.) of the Government Decree on sites of European Community importance for nature conservation
10/2007. (III. 30.) KvVM rendelet a Mura-menti Tájvédelmi Körzet létesítéséről	10/2007. (III. 30.) KvVM Decree on the establishment of the Mura Landscape Protection Area
625/2022. (XII. 30.) Korm. rendelet a természetvédelmi hatósági és igazgatási feladatokat ellátó szervek kijelöléséről	Government Decree No 625/2022 (XII. 30.) on the designation of bodies performing nature conservation authority and administrative tasks

Croatian legal provisions

In Croatian	In English
Zakon o zaštiti prirode, NN 80/13, 15/18, 14/19, 127/19	Law on the Protection of Nature, NN 80/13, 15/18, 14/19, 127/19
Pravilnik o strogo zaštićenim vrstama (NN 144/13)	Ordinance on Strictly Protected Species (OG 144/13)
Pravilnik o vrstama stanišnih tipova, karti staništa, ugroženim i rijetkim stanišnim tipovima te o mjerama za održavanje stanišnih tipova (NN 07/06 i 119/09)	Ordinance on types of habitat types, habitat map, endangered and rare habitat types, and measures to maintain habitat types (Official Gazette 07/06 and 119/09)
Uredba o ekološkoj mreži i nadležnostima javnih ustanova za upravljanje područjima ekološke mreže (NN 80/19)	Regulation on the ecological network and the competences of public institutions for the management of ecological network areas (Official Gazette 80/19)
Pravilnik o ocjeni prihvatljivosti za ekološku mrežu (NN 146/14)	Rulebook on assessment of acceptability for the ecological network (Official Gazette 146/14)
Strategija i akcijski plan zaštite biološke i krajobrazne raznolikosti Republike Hrvatske za razdoblje od 2017. do 2025. godine (NN 72/17)	Strategy and action plan for the protection of biological and landscape diversity of the Republic of Croatia for the period from 2017 to 2025 (Official Gazette 72/17)
Pravilnik o ciljevima očuvanja i mjerama očuvanja ciljnih vrsta ptica u području ekološke mreže (NN 25/20)	Rulebook on conservation goals and conservation measures of target bird species in the area of the ecological network (Official Gazette 25/20)