



The river Sava: Threats and restoration potential

9am – 11 am, 28 March 2017,
A5G1 European Parliament

Background

Intensive agriculture, urbanization, hydropower production, inland water navigation, flood protection schemes and climate change have extensively altered European hydrological systems and freshwater habitats which represent approximately 2.4 % of the EU-28 area.

Many rivers in Europe are at risk and among them we can find the Sava River, which is the most voluminous tributary of the Danube, connecting four countries and more than 8 million people who live in and from its catchment area. It represents one of Europe's ecologically and culturally most interesting lifelines.

Despite the recognition of the outstanding ecological value of the Sava River (five riparian areas totaling 74,888 ha have been designated as Ramsar sites and most parts of the Sava River in Slovenia and Croatia have already been included in the EU Natura 2000 network), the Sava river basin is faced with developments that would endanger the ecological quality of the river and the floodplain areas. Plans for hydropower plants as well as navigation development, and the lack of restrictive policies for dredging, all these have direct negative consequence on the long term preservation of the river's characteristic biodiversity and rich ecosystem functions. In the same time, these threats would increase the risk of floods in downstream communities, towns, and settlements. Ensuring the sustainable management of water across watersheds and within river basins will be central to driving progress across the whole spectrum of environmental, social and economic goals. In turn, safeguarding and restoring wetlands – the water sources and sinks in the landscape – will be vital to achieve the water goal as well as to enhance biodiversity; reduce water-related disaster risks; address climate change mitigation and adaptation; and reduce land degradation. Planning should respect the limitations and possibilities of the characteristic natural conditions that the Sava river basin offers.

The Sava White Book shall serve as an extensive and comprehensive overview of the situation of the Sava River. However, what makes this White Book truly unique is that it is the first study offering suggestions for area-specific ecological flood control and river restoration projects. In other words, it shows where former alluvial areas could be naturally flooded once again and in which sections Sava's river bed should be given more space.

AGENDA

- 8.45 – 9.00 Welcoming coffee
- 9.00 – 9.10 **Opening and Introduction**
Host and Chair: **Mr Igor Soltes**, MEP, The Greens/EFA
Co-hosts: **Mr Ivan Jakovčić**, MEP, ALDE
- 9.10 – 9.25 Presentation of **the Sava White Book**
The Sava River Basin – its ecological character, main threats and restoration potential
Gabriel Schwaderer, CEO, EuroNatur Foundation
- 9.25 – 9.35 **The Sava Parks Network – an important driver for sustainable development of the Sava River Basin**
Teo Oršanič, Spokesman of SavaParks Network and General Manager of Kozjanski Park (Slovenia)
- 9.35 – 9.45 **Natural flood mitigation in the Sava Basin – outstanding example and further potential**
Tibor Mikuska, Croatian Society for Bird and Nature Protection
- 9.45 – 10:00 **Accession negotiations in the light of EU environmental directives**
Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for *European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations*, EC - tbc
- 10:00 – 10:15 **The Review of the Water Framework Directive and river basin management planning**
DG ENVI - Mr Hans Stielstra, Deputy Head of Unit for Water
- 10.15 – 10.30 **Contributions** by Representatives of the SavaParks Network
- Iris Beneš (Brod Ecological Society, Croatia)
- Slobodan Puzović (Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province, Serbia)
- 10:30 – 10:55 **Q & A** session and discussion
- 10:55 – 11.00 **Conclusions**