

GWP Central and Eastern Europe

Established: October 2001

GWP Central and Eastern Europe
Chair: Mr. Liviu N. Popescu
Coordinator: Mr. Milan Matuska
c/o Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute
Jeseniova 17
833 15 Bratislava, Slovak Republic
Tel: +421 2 5941 5224
Fax: +421 2 5941 5273
E-mail: gwpcee@shmu.sk
Website: www.gwpceeforum.org



Water situation today

The region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), covered by GWP, has a total area of over 2.03 million km² and is mostly located in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea basins. Rivers in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland discharge their flows to the Eastern Baltic Sea. The second group of countries – Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine – is located in the Danube River basin which flows into the Black Sea.

Water resources in the CEE region are important for the development of its countries, providing water for consumption, sanitation, irrigation, industrial use, navigation, fishing, recreation, and other purposes. Ecosystems depending on water form the backbone of the region's biodiversity including lakes, river basins, wetlands, coastal areas and groundwater. Throughout the region many water ecosystems have suffered from degradation or are threatened by pollution, overuse of surface and groundwater and habitat losses. The application of integrated approaches to water management, use and development, which meets the demands of the population, and satisfies the needs of water ecosystems, remains a key challenge.

Programmes and action

GWP Central and Eastern Europe consists of twelve country water partnerships that provide an inclusive and neutral platform for stakeholders. With the enlargement of the European Union in January 2007, ten countries in the region are EU members. This opens up the opportunity for new joint ventures within the union. The country water partnerships also act as IWRM facilitators in the non-EU countries.

The programme objective is to support countries with integrated approaches to more sustainable water resources development, management and use. Over the next years, GWP Central and Eastern Europe plans to undertake several initiatives including increased multi-sectoral dialogues, and raising political will for adoption of integrated water resources management (IWRM) principles – the first phase of that goal could be implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.

There has been a steady increase in interest for public participation, as well as recognition for it on different governance levels, in a wide range of sectors and contexts, including environmental management. To respond to this, GWP established the Public Participation Task Force covering Eastern Baltic region and the Danube River basin.

Another task force has focused on Sustainable Sanitation. It seeks alternative and decentralized solution to sanitation services in IWRM context for rural population, constituting 20–40% of the total population in CEE countries. As a first step, a group of experts prepared a regional book, *Sustainable Sanitation in Central and Eastern Europe: Addressing the Needs of Small and Medium-Size Settlements*,

providing an comprehensive overview of the sanitation state in CEE countries, methodological guidance to open planning process in sanitation, case studies of successful implementation of alternative approaches in sanitation in the region and in Sweden and Germany, and finally an overview of EU legislation related to application of alternative and decentralized solutions to sanitation. The book is an example of experts cooperation from the region enhanced by more experienced specialists from old EU members states (Sweden, Germany). This action is also well timed to contribute to the International Year of Sanitation 2008.

Since 2003, there has been an ongoing study on flash floods under the auspices of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)-GWP Associated Programme on Floods Management. A manual, Guidance on Flash Flood Management-Recent Experiences from Central and Eastern Europe, has been published (www.gwpceeforum.org) that provides easily accessible guidance on flash flood management to mayors, provincial administrators and the National Meteorological and Hydrological Service. This will help improve the efficiency of the professional centres to forecast and more successfully save properties and the lives of communities in flash floods prone areas.

GWP Bulgaria Water Partnership

Geographically and climatically Bulgaria can be categorized as semi-arid. According to the classification made by the European Economic Council, Bulgaria is among the countries with relatively poor water resources of 2,376 m³ per capita per year. The average annual aggregate capacity of stored and utilized water resources varies between 23.5 and 10.7 km³ and, together with the Danube River, it amounts to 27.5 km³ in wet years and 14.7 km³ in dry years.

Water is managed at both national level (Council of the Ministers and Ministry of the Environment and Water) and at the river basin level (four River Basin Directorates at the Ministry of the Environment and Water, and River Basin

Councils). In 2002, GWP Bulgaria and the Ministry of the Environment and Water signed an agreement of cooperation. Currently, more than fifty Bulgarian organizations are members of GWP.

Established: November 2002
Prof. Ivan Raev
Ohridsky Bld. 132
1756 Sofia, Bulgaria
Tel/fax: +359 2 987 0461
Mobile: +359 887 602 672
E-mail: bwpg@dir.bg
Website: www.gwpbg.org

GWP Czech Water Partnership

The Czech Republic has a total area of 78,866 km². Most of Czech rivers flow into the North Sea (65%), others into the Black and Baltic Sea. The annual availability of surface water per capita is 1,400 m³, that is, about one third of the European average. About 75% of the country's 10.3 million inhabitants live in urban areas. Of the total population, 88% is supplied by public water systems and 76% is connected to public sewerage systems. Water supply companies are privatized and in some regions, organizations of infrastructure owners have been established.

The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment supervises water management. Some water issues lie within the competency of other ministries such as those for transport and industry. Regarding the management of river basins, state owned enterprises are responsible for the

administration and management of five major basins. GWP Czech Republic, also called the Czech Water Club, was officially established in 2001 under the Czech Water Scientific and Technical Society (CVT VHS). Currently, the Water and Environmental Technology Team hosts the Partnership and translates key IWRM publications and organises conferences and other events.

Established: November 2001
Prof. Petr Dolejs
c/o Water and Environmental Technology Team
P.O. Box 27, Pisecka 2
370 11 Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic
Tel: +420 603 440 922
Fax: +420 385 522 109
E-mail: petr.dolejs@cmail.cz

GWP Estonia Water Partnership

Estonia is rich in water resources. The average volume of the surface water available per capita per year is about 8,000 m³. About 75% of the population is connected to a centralized water supply system. Estonia has some problems with the quality of groundwater and drinking water.

GWP Estonia is closely linked to the Estonia Water Association. As a result of this relationship, the partnership has many water professionals involved in GWP activities. The backbone of these activities is awareness raising and involvement of the interested public in river basin management plans according to the EU Water Framework Directive requirements, in the context of IWRM.

The Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation, an NGO active in Peipsi Lake, submitted several successful case studies

for the IWRM ToolBox. Since 2002, the partnership has organised a series of dialogues on Effective Water Governance; Financial Flows in the Water Sector; Water, Food and Environment and IWRM Planning. In addition, the partnership has hosted an international workshop on public private partnerships in the municipal water sector.

Established: July 2001
Mr. Andres Marandi
c/o Estonian Water Association
Mustamäe tee 33
10616, Tallinn, Estonia
Tel: +372 737 4807
Fax: +372 737 4900
E-mail: andres.marandi@ut.ee
Website: www.veeyhing.ee

GWP Hungary Water Partnership

The two main rivers – the Danube and the Tisza – and Lake Balaton, together with thermal springs, ensure safe water supplies for the country. Water however, may also cause serious problems – authorities, associations and other stakeholders in the water sector are facing challenges relating to quality, quantity, and floods, and consequently need to address institutional issues.

GWP Hungary is promoting cooperation between those interested in IWRM, with special regard to the protection of the aquatic environment, floods and excess water protection,

and to the management of shared rivers or lake basins and the implementation of EU Water Framework Directive.

Established: February 2002
Mr. Gyula Reich
Etele u. 59-61
H-1119 Budapest, Hungary
Tel: +36 1 371 1333
Fax: +36 1 371 1333
E-mail: gwpmo@gwpmo.hu
Website: www.gwpmo.hu

GWP Latvia Water Partnership

The country has approximately 34 km³ of surface water and 4.7 km³ of groundwater resources available annually. Latvia generally does not have a water shortage problem as annual precipitation exceeds evaporation by 250 mm – in humid years even by 500–600 mm. There are more than 12,400 rivers and 2,256 lakes in the state, which together with water reservoirs for hydroelectric power stations cover 3.7% of the state territory. Wetland ecosystems make up 10% of Latvian territory.

GWP Latvia has a well-structured network in place for an exchange of ideas, information and good practices. The network consists of water management professionals and experts as well as representatives of municipal and state administra-

tion. Activities include the support of more integrated approaches to water management and implementation of EU Water Framework Directive on the river basin level through participation in different projects.

Established: April 2004
Mr. Ivars Sekacis
c/o Society "Daugavas Savienība"
Lacplesa street 1
LV-5101 Aizkraukle, Latvia
Tel: +371 51 22266
Fax: +371 51 22238
E-mail: aizrp@apollo.lv
Website: www.vvi.gov.lv/gwp

GWP Lithuania Water Partnership

In Lithuania, there are plentiful surface and groundwater resources. Surface water availability is 7.043 m³ per capita per year and close to 1,000 litres/capita/day of groundwater could be extracted without any damage to the environment.

GWP-Lithuania is recognized by the environmental governmental institutions and is focusing on promotion of IWRM. In 2007 GWP-Lithuania signed an Agreement with Lithuanian EPA and became Information Centre for dissemination of information to stakeholders on river basin management. This will help Lithuanian Water Partnership to bring people who represent different interests together, in order to discuss, listen and reach a mutual understanding on IWRM.

In 2007 membership of GWP-Lithuania consisted of around one hundred active individuals and eight institutions, representing ministries, NGOs, professional associations and business sector.

The principal activities of the Partnership include awareness raising

through seminars involving mass media on important water issues, for example on IWRM, public participation, the EU Water Framework Directive and other water related EU directives. On the local level, GWP Lithuania interacts with decision-makers and the public and involves them in regional and national activities. Through translating and distributing GWP publications, the Partnership has successfully advocated and advanced GWP water initiatives throughout the country.

Established: September 2000

Dr. Bernardas Paukstys

c/o Public Establishment "Vandens namai"

Juozapaviciaus street 6/2

LT-09310, Vilnius, Lithuania

Tel: +370 5 2757 278

Fax: +370 5 2757 278

E-mail: bernadas@iti.lt

Website: www.vandensklubas.lt

GWP Moldova Water Partnership

Moldova Water Partnership was established in March 2007, after stakeholder meeting held in October 2006 in the capital city of Chisinau. Currently, NGO Centre for Strategic Environmental Studies (ECOS) hosts the partnership.

The main objectives are to promote IWRM, to provide the neutral platform for the water policy dialogue, and to facilitate knowledge exchange and implementation of action programs by water stakeholders. Main stakeholders include governmental

institutions, NGOs, municipalities and research and educational institutions.

Established: March 2007

Dr. Tatiana Belous

c/o Regional Center for Strategic Environmental Studies

sos. Hincesti, 58, r. 75

2028 Chisinau, Moldova

Phone: +373 22 723 567

E-mail: ecos_csec@mail.md, drumead25@yahoo.com

GWP Poland Water Partnership

Located in the Baltic Sea Basin, Poland has a mean annual water resources per capita of approximately 1,600m³, almost three times less than the mean value for Europe. In addition, the available resources are subject to great year-to-year variability. Devastating floods and local water scarcities are frequent. Water quality management is one of the key problems, creating problems for people's livelihoods and the environment. Seven regional river basin authorities were established in 1991.

The main objectives of GWP Poland are to promote the principles of IWRM and provide a forum for bringing water stakeholders together for knowledge exchange and implementation of action programs. It comprises around a hundred members representing government, water authorities, academia, nongovernmental ecological organizations and various sectors of economy. The current programs deal especially with

water, environment and sustainable development of rural regions, water governance improvements, and promotion of economic instruments in the area of water and environmental management. Actions include stakeholder meetings, baseline studies, local pilot actions, guidelines and publications, all contributing to achieving the Partnership's objectives.

Established: February 2001

Prof. Janusz Kindler

c/o Warsaw University of Technology

Faculty of Environmental Engineering

ul. Nowowiejska 20

00-653 Warsaw, Poland

Tel: +48 22 2345 301

Fax: +48 22 2345 362

E-mail: Janusz.Kindler@is.pw.edu.pl

Website: www.gwppl.org

GWP Romania Water Partnership

Romania's water resources are relatively poor and unequally distributed in time and space with 194 natural lakes and a potential annual 9 billion m³ of exploitable groundwater. In Romania, 98% of the territory lies within the Danube river basin, where the river is regulated over most of its course. The Danube Delta, where the river flows into the Black Sea, is a unique ecological system in Europe. Because of its high biodiversity the whole zone has been declared a protected area and a World Natural Heritage Site.

Romania uses both surface water and groundwater. During the last 50 years huge infrastructure investments were made in order to increase the water resources availability and to improve flood protection.

GWP has been present in Romania since 1998. GWP Romania is registered in the Special Register of Bucharest Court as an Association and is located in capital city of Bucharest. The main

partners are the National Water Administration, the Ministry of Environment Water Management, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, private companies and wastewater treatment enterprises. GWP Romania cooperates also with universities in the capital as well as in the countryside in dissemination of information on IWRM and organisation of dialogues and discussions on more integrated approaches to water resources management.

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Dipl.Eng. Liviu Nicolae Popescu
Asociatia Parteneriatul Global al Apei din Romania "GWP-Romania"
Aleea Fizicienilor No 4,
Bloc 3C, Floor 2, Ap 16, Sector 3,
Cod 032113, Bucharest, Romania
Tel: +40 21 3480 947
Fax: +40 21 3182 001
E-mail: lipopesc@icim.ro, lipopesc@yahoo.com
Website: www.gwp-romania.ro

GWP Slovak Republic Water Partnership

The Slovak Republic is divided between the Danube River basin (96%) and the Vistula River basin (4%). Surface water and groundwater resources are plentiful. As in most other countries in the region, available water resources are subject to great variability and the country experiences both devastating floods and droughts. Groundwater is used as drinking water for approximately 80% of the 5.4 million inhabitants.

GWP was first introduced in the Slovak Republic in 1998, when the country became a regular member of GWP Central and Eastern Europe. Since then, a number of activities have been carried out to promote IWRM principles and build bridges between different stakeholders and sectors that manage, develop and use water resources. GWP Slovakia consists of members representing governmental, non-governmental organ-

izations and universities. Present programs and activities include cross-sectoral issues of water and environment, water and education and sustainable development of regions and local municipalities. The partnership also participates in the implementation of the EU water legislation. In addition, it focuses on the education of socially marginal communities, living mainly in rural areas in Eastern Slovakia.

Established: November 2001

Dr. Boris Minarik
c/o Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute
Jeseniova 17
833 15 Bratislava, Slovak Republic
Tel: +421 2 5941 5239
Fax: +421 2 5941 5393
E-mail: boris.minarik@shmu.sk

GWP Slovenia Water Partnership

The geographical position of Slovenia at the meeting point of the Alps, the Mediterranean, the Dinaric mountain chain, and the Pannonian plain influences the diversity of nature, cultures and people. The diversity is further enriched by the Slovenian waters. Although the small country (20,256 km²) does not offer much room for large water bodies, there are 7,400 km of water courses, thousands of springs, waterfalls, gorges and lakes, as well as the Adriatic Sea.

The main activity of the partnership is to promote IWRM principles and to act as an independent platform for discussion, offering stakeholders a neutral ground for their dialogue. Main stakeholders include government institutions, local governments, professional associations, research institutions, students,

private sector and NGOs. GWP Slovenia is also actively involved in the implementation of EU water related legislation. It promotes IWRM principles at the local level, in schools through local authorities, the Geography Teachers Association and local communities.

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Ms. Martina Zupan
c/o Limnos Company for Applied Ecology d.o.o.
Podlimbarskega 31
1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
Tel: +386 1 427 32 45
Fax: +386 1 505 73 86
E-mail: martina.zupan@siol.net
Website: www.gwpslovenija.org

GWP Ukraine Water Partnership

Ukraine Water Partnership was established in February 2006, following up a stakeholder meeting, held in December 2005. The main objectives are to promote the principles of IWRM as well as the EU Water Framework Directive, to provide a neutral platform for the water policy dialogue, to facilitate knowledge exchange and implementation of action programs by water stakeholders. Main stakeholders include governmental institutions, basin organizations, research and educational institutions, private sector and NGOs.

In Ukraine, the lack of permanent access to clean drinking water is an important environmental, as well as a health issue, which is one of the most water deficient countries in Europe with less than 1,000 m³ per capita per year. Ukraine was

among the first Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia countries developing IWRM implementation plans and establishing river basin commissions/councils. Institutional as well as financial issues are the main obstacles of successful IWRM implementation in Ukraine.

Established: 2006
Mr. Andriy Demydenko
c/o Ukrainian Center of Environmental and Water Projects
Prospekt Glushkova 42
03187 Kiev, Ukraine
Phone: +380 50 3529 670
Fax: +380 44 5263 615
E-mail: andriyd@ucewp.kiev.ua

Country Water Partnerships in GWP Central and Eastern Europe:

GWP Bulgaria Water Partnership
GWP Czech Water Partnership
GWP Estonia Water Partnership
GWP Hungary Water Partnership
GWP Latvia Water Partnership
GWP Lithuania Water Partnership
GWP Moldova Water Partnership
GWP Poland Water Partnership
GWP Romania Water Partnership
GWP Slovakia Water Partnership
GWP Slovenia Water Partnership
GWP Ukraine Water Partnership