

27th Ordinary Meeting



Summary of Agenda Item 3.4.1

Title: **LIFE WILDisland and Ramsar Regional Initiative/ICPDR hosting**

The LIFE WILDisland project officially started in September 2021 and will run between 2021 and 2027, with the ICPDR as an associated strategic project partner (<https://wildisland.danubeparks.org>).

One of the project goals is to mobilize political support and recognition to use islands as indicators of preserved natural hydrological and morphological processes and symbols of intact lateral, longitudinal, and vertical connectivity through the creation of a Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI). It is seen as a tool to foster international and cross-sector cooperation by providing synergies for the objectives of the ICPDR, the EU biodiversity policy framework, and the Convention on Wetlands and to strengthen the Danube as an ecological corridor acting as an example of best practices for establishing European Green and Blue Infrastructure.

Recognizing the potential of the Danube WILDisland RRI, during its ICPDR OM-26 (December 2023), the ICPDR welcomed and accepted the offer to take over the patronage of the future RRI without extra staff or financial burden, and the ICPDR Executive Secretary submitted the complete set of application documents to the Secretary of the Convention on Wetlands in December 2023, with minor budgetary and timeline revisions re-submitted in February 2024.

The Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative was [formally adopted at the 63rd Meeting the Ramsar Standing Committee](#), Geneva, Switzerland in June 2024 as the 22nd world and first river-based RRI in Europe. A [symbolic handover](#) from the Convention on Wetlands to the ICPDR took place in the frame of the EUSDR Annual Forum during the Danube Party on 20 June 2024 in Vienna. The [internal kick-off](#) was carried out on 8 September 2024 in Tulcea, Romania.

Thanks to the efforts of the DANUBEPARKS Association and the LIFE WILDisland project as initiators, the Danube WILDisland RRI received start-up funding from the Core Budget of the Convention on Wetlands (29.000 CHF for 2024 with funding up to six years subject to annual revision) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMU), Germany (224 000 EUR for 2024-2027).

The funds will be used to implement the [annual 2024 and 2025 plans](#) submitted to and approved by the Convention on Wetlands to establish a new Lower Danube office of DANUBEPARKS hosted by the Persina Nature Park in Bulgaria for coordinating the RRI physically. The new office will create long-term Strategic and Communication Plans to steer the work of the RRI and set priorities. Funding is secured for organizing a set of workshops to support networking, exchange of best practices and experience, and develop joint projects and initiatives. A set of small-scale practical measures for the participating countries will be launched. The RRI will anchor itself on an international scale through promotion and awareness campaigns, including at the [15th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Wetlands](#), which will take place between 23-31 July 2025 in Zimbabwe. As a formal host and member of the RRI, the ICPDR will receive all relevant documents, projects, annual plans and reports of the RRI and has the right to vote at its annual meetings.

The Convention on Wetlands is one of the formal observers of the ICPDR. The strengthened cooperation and involvement of the ICPDR with the formal submission of the RRI concept is a logical step and will increase the prominence and acknowledgment of the ICPDR and DANUBEPARKS within the Convention on Wetlands, ensure strategic and operational synergies, and provide extra tools and access to additional funding sources to achieve our mutual goals.

[Link to latest EG/TG meeting summary:](#) None.

Document(s):

- none

Action and/or Proposed Resolutions (to be confirmed by the ICPDR):

The ICPDR

- a) asks the Secretariat and the DANUBEPARKS Association as Coordinating Unit, to regularly inform the ICPDR on the Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative activities and developments at its meetings.