

Annex II

Terms of References of the Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative (WILDisland)

I. Purposes

1. Within the framework of the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971), these Terms of Reference, made public and shared with the Ramsar Secretariat, set out the organization and functioning of the Danube WILDisland Initiative (hereafter referred to as Danube WILDisland), which was established to support countries in the along the Danube river and its region (hereafter referred to as Region) in their implementation of the conservation and wise use of wetlands, for the first, with main focus on islands as “flagship habitats” for river dynamics, and as stepping stones within the river corridor.
2. Danube WILDisland is a long-term collaborative effort between Danube Basin countries and entities, the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, intergovernmental institutions, international non-governmental organizations, national institutions specialized in wetland issues, and finally, Danube protected areas, which aims to ensure the effective conservation of wetlands and the wise use of their resources, values and services within the framework of the Ramsar Convention.
3. Danube WILDisland is an endogenous mechanism based on mutual trust and respect.
4. Danube WILDisland shall foster synergies with the relevant institutions dealing with the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the Danube region.

II. Scope and Objectives of Danube WILDisland

5. Danube WILDisland is a Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI) intended to provide operational means for international cooperation and support for an effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention and its Strategic Plan in the Danube region, for improving the visibility of the Ramsar Convention and wetland-related issues of common concern through voluntary international cooperation at regional level and, in particular involving all relevant national and regional stakeholders.
6. The Danube WILDisland objectives are:
 - a) to **promote the effective implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan**, pertinent Ramsar Resolutions and relevant policies and initiatives in the Danube region by supporting actions on the ground by governments, civil society organizations and the private sector;
 - b) to **foster international and cross-sector cooperation** and natural river island protection, **gain political support** to strengthen the Danube as an ecological corridor connecting more bio-geographic regions than any other corridor in Europe, and act as an example of best practices for the establishment of European Green and Blue Infrastructure, stressing on restoring river dynamics and natural hydrological regimes.

- c) to **preserve, develop and restore the Danube River**, its adjacent floodplains and main tributaries as an integrating ecosystem and inspiring lifeline for the new European macro-region and its inhabitants.
- d) to **reinforce capacities** in areas where these are not sufficiently developed, and especially to **develop and ensure adaptive and integrated management and wise-use** of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) and other wetlands.
- e) to **transfer to and exchange knowledge and expertise** among key conservation and sustainable use actors in order to reinforce Danube wetland management; and
- f) to **coordinate with other regional and international actions and programmes** relevant for wetland conservation and sustainable use, thereby serving to build synergies to support the implementation of the Convention in the region.

7. The Danube WILDisland RRI strategic targets are to:

- a) **ensure the integrity and preservation** of natural riparian ecosystems; with a main focus on intact river dynamics and hydro-morphological integrity, as demonstrated by natural riverine islands
- b) develop the Danube River as an intact bio-corridor, **restoring the lateral and longitudinal connectivity** of the Danube habitat corridor as a best practice in river restoration, bottom-up approach and cross-sector cooperation;
- c) **support and promote sustainable, wise-use and non-intervention management** of riparian wetlands and their natural resources;
- d) **improve and coordinate** protected and Ramsar area management practices;
- e) **raise awareness** among the general public and decision-makers about the protection of wetlands and the Danube River;

III. Membership to Danube WILDisland

8. Types of membership

There shall be following categories of membership:

- a) Full members, with the right to vote:
 - (i) Host: ICPDR;
 - (ii) Country-members, who are Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, located at the main course of the Danube river, and who have signed the “National Letter of Support”, to express their commitment to cooperate within and support the work the Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative (Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine) (Focal area 1);
 - (iii) DANUBEPARKS Association as physically hosting and administering the Danube WILDisland Office as a formal Coordination Unit of the RRI;
 - (iv) Non-country members: national non-governmental organizations; international non-governmental organizations; other non-governmental organizations; universities and research centers,

local communities and the private sector.

- b) Observers/supporting members, with no right to vote:
 - (i) individuals who are broadly acknowledged as having contributed significantly to the WILDIsland concept, which status is awarded by the Danube WILDIsland Steering Group (SG) following a proposal of the Danube WILDIsland Coordination Unit or other full members as well as Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention in the Danube catchment area but located not directly along the Danube (Focal area 2: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Montenegro and Slovenia and Focal area 3: Albania, Italy, Macedonia, Poland, Switzerland).
 - (ii) Ramsar Secretariat

9. **Members shall:**

- a) support and facilitate the objectives, activities and governance of the Danube WILDIsland RRI;
- b) have the right to participate, speak and vote at meetings and events; receive annual report and information regarding Danube WILDIsland; and the right to be promoted with their logo on the website and annual public events;
- c) provide to WILDIsland, upon request, readily available information regarding their activities in support of its objectives;
- d) avoid pursuing objectives or carry out activities that conflict with the objectives or activities of the Danube WILDIsland RRI;
- e) disclose any potential conflict of interest on matters under consideration by the Danube WILDIsland SG and refrain from participating in the discussion and voting on these matters;
- f) provide this Regional Initiative with political and potential financial support, and in-kind support through the provision of expert and staff time, according to the operational needs and in line with the common decisions of the Steering Group of the RRI;
- g) The ICPDR Secretariat, the DANUBEPARKS Management Board and the Non-country full members appoint a main contact person who will represent them within the Danube WILDIsland RRI, and be the first point of contact for the Danube WILDIsland RRI executive and steering bodies. For Country Members the main contact person is the officially recognized National Focal Point of the Ramsar Convention.

10. **Observers/supporting members shall**

- a) support and facilitate the objectives, activities and governance of the Danube WILDIsland;

- b) have the right to participate and speak at meetings and events; receive annual report and information regarding the Danube WILDIsland; and the right to be promoted with their logo on the website and annual public events;
- c) provide contacts, advice and resources regarding their activities in support of the Danube WILDIsland objectives;
- d) avoid pursuing objectives or carry out activities that conflict with the objectives or activities of the Danube WILDIsland;
- e) appoint a main contact person who will represent them within the Danube WILDIsland RRI, and be the first point of contact for the Danube WILDIsland RRI executive and steering bodies.

II. Admission

- a) The current list of full-members and observers/supporters of the Danube WILDIsland RRI is provided in Annex 2.1. The list can be updated on a regular basis, following the procedures described in detail below.
- b) Members are admitted as follows:
 - (i) Countries shall become members of the Danube WILDIsland RRI by notifying the Danube WILDIsland SG of their adhesion to the Danube WILDIsland Statutes and these Terms of Reference, effective upon the issuing of a National Letter of Support.
 - (ii) Non-countries shall become members of the Danube WILDIsland RRI when the WILDIsland SG has determined that the applicant:
 - shares the objectives of the Danube WILDIsland RRI;
 - is active in the conservation of nature and natural resources, including their scientific, educational, legal, economic, social and political dimensions, at global, regional, national and local levels;
 - is committed to participate actively in the Danube WILDIsland activities of the annually adopted work plan;
 - does not pursue objectives or carry out activities that conflict with the objectives or activities of the Danube WILDIsland RRI; and
 - signs a formal letter of engagement to the Danube WILDIsland Coordination Unit, using the format adopted by the Ramsar Standing Committee for the Ramsar Regional Initiatives.
 - (iii) Observers are admitted by the WILDIsland SG following a proposal from the Coordination Unit (CoU).
- c) Membership will be effective upon the submission of the National Letter of Support (in the case of Country Members) or the approval from the

SG (in case of Non-Country Members or Observers). The WILDIsland SG shall admit the applicant by a majority of votes cast at the annual meeting of the Steering Group, or via email. In case of email admission, the following rule shall apply: The membership application shall be attached to the email sent out by the Danube WILDIsland RRI Coordination Unit (CoU). The email must be sent to all contact people and to all legal representatives of all full members. All full members have the right to vote for or against the admission of the new member within 14 days. No response is considered as a positive vote of approval; therefore, no minimum turnout is needed.

12. Suspension, Rescission and Withdrawal

- a) Membership can be terminated by resignation, expulsion, or loss of legal status of a legal entity. In case of resignation by the member, which must be done in written form to the Coordination Unit (CoU) or Steering Group (SG), the termination can take effect immediately if wished. The decision for expulsion needs to be taken by the SG and can be done via email voting.
- b) Should a Member act in a manner seriously inconsistent with the requirements of article 9, the Danube WILDIsland SG may suspend that Member by a two-thirds majority of votes cast. While under suspension, a member shall not be entitled to exercise any membership rights except the right of withdrawal. To reinstate membership of the Danube WILDIsland SG after being suspended, the Admission procedure as stated in para. 8 has to be completed.
- c) Membership can be terminated by resignation, expulsion, or loss of legal status of a legal entity. In case of resignation by the member, which must be done in written form to the Danube WILDIsland SG, the termination can take effect immediately if wished.

The Member withdrawing shall not be entitled to any refund of eventual financial contributions paid.

IV. Governance and functioning

13. The Danube WILDIsland RRI structure is composed of three:
 - a) **Management Body:** a governing and decision-making body, the Danube WILDIsland Steering Group (WILDIsland SG), bringing together all members of the RRI;
 - b) **Coordinating Unit,** the Danube WILDIsland Office, as an especially established, distinct regional office of the DANUBEPARKS Association;
 - c) **Working Groups:** national or cross-country and cross-sector advisory scientific and technical groups;
14. The Danube WILDIsland RRI shall establish regular contacts and cooperation with the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the Convention's programme on Communication, Capacity building, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA)

National Focal Points of the Danube WILDIsland Country Members, as well as with other appropriate experts, in order to obtain the best scientific and technical advice, and to contribute with the Danube WILDIsland regional experience and knowledge into STRP's and CEPA's work at the global level.

V. The Danube WILDIsland Steering Group (WILDIsland SG)

15. The WILDIsland Steering Group is the governing and decision-making body, bringing together all members of the RRI, as follows:
 - a) ICPDR as formal host;
 - b) Country Members;
 - c) DANUBE PARKS Association as a physical host of the CoU;
 - d) Non-country members;
 - e) Observers;
16. The WILDIsland Steering Group has the following tasks and responsibilities:
 - a) **Strategic planning and management:**
 - (i) makes strategic decisions for the initiative;
 - (ii) identifies, prioritizes and addresses regionally important or transboundary problems of the Danube wetlands management;
 - (iii) takes any other decisions for the good and effective functioning of the Initiative;
 - b) **Practical tasks:**
 - (i) admits new members of the Danube WILDIsland RRI;
 - (ii) approves the withdraw of members of the Danube WILDIsland RRI;
 - (iii) approves the selection and replacement of the WILDIsland Coordinator;
 - (iv) approves and creates the WILDIsland Working Groups;
 - c) **Control and adoption of official documents:**
 - (i) adopts the Danube WILDIsland strategic documents, including the three-year strategic work plan, annual budget and audit accounts, and work plans;
 - (ii) monitors the implementation and results of the Danube WILDIsland activities;
 - (iii) approves and monitors the implementation and results of the Initiative Annual Working Plan and CEPA related activities;
 - (iv) considers reports and recommendations from the Coordination Unit and adopts decisions on any action needed, as appropriate;
 - d) **Promotion and lobbying:**
 - (i) defines and disseminates good practices and tools for the decision-making process in the framework of the Initiative, at regional level;

- (ii) promotes initiatives and projects on local level;
- (iii) strengthens integration among different sectors at the local, national and regional levels, relevant institutions, governmental bodies and international organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders;
- (iv) supports activities or/and proposals for conservation of the riparian wetland areas.

VI. The Danube WILDIsland Coordinating body

17. The Coordinating Unit (CoU) of the Danube WILDIsland RRI is the Danube WILDIsland Office, an especially established, distinct regional office of the DANUBEPARKS Association, fully devoted to the coordination of the RRI with a full-time coordinator.
18. The Coordinating Unit has the following tasks and responsibilities:
- a) represents the Danube WILDIsland RRI as required and carries out other functions as may be entrusted to him/her by the WILDIsland SG;
 - b) prepares and submits strategic documents, including the three-year strategic work plan, annual budget, and RRI Annual Working Plans and CEPA related activities to the WILDIsland SG, DANUBEPARKS MB, the Ramsar Secretariat and its Standing Committee regularly or upon specific request;
 - c) prepares the annual budget and is responsible for the accounting of the RRI;
 - d) steers the operational work of the RRI;
 - e) communicates with WILDIsland RRI partners and donors;
 - f) develops, produces and maintains the RRI communication tools (website etc);
 - g) drafts specific project proposals and presents to the Management Unit for approval;
 - h) manages projects and initiatives in line with the WILDIsland RRI goals and objectives;
 - i) provides constant communication with the DANUBEPARKS Secretariat;
 - j) organizes the timely meetings of the WILDIsland SG as a Management Body;
 - k) reports to the WILDIsland Steering Group, the DANUBEPARKS Management Board and the Ramsar Secretariat;
19. In case the DANUBEPARKS Association is dissolved in line with the conditions, described in the DANUBEPARKS Statute, the new physical host and staff of the Coordination Unit is selected among one of the other full Members (a Country or a non-Country Member) at a targeted force-majeure Annual Meeting of the Steering Group, organized within 6 weeks of the formal dissolving of the Association or following a written request for Coordination Unit change, filed in writing by at least two-thirds of the Danube WILDIsland RRI Members.

VII. Working groups

20. Working groups consist of RRI Members, Observers and other interested external experts, government- and non-government institutions;
21. Working groups provide particular scientific advice and consultation, project and concept and proposal writing on given issues of particular interest;
22. Working groups are formed upon need and request expressed at the Annual Meetings of the RRI. The operation of the working groups is provided by the Members on a voluntary basis or supported through international grants and Ramsar-core Funding

VIII. Meetings and decision-making

23. The Danube WILDIsland RRI Steering Group (WILDIsland SG) meets **periodically, at least once a year on an Annual Meeting**, preferably face-to-face but **shall operate largely through email and online processes**.
24. The WILDIsland SG Meetings are chaired and organized by the Danube WILDIsland Coordination Unit (CoU) in line with the procedures described in the Rules of procedure of the Danube WILDIsland RRI, which are an integral part of the current document (Annex 2.2).
25. Each full-member of the WILDIsland RRI (ICPDR, DANUBEPARKS, Country- and Non-Country Member) has the right to cast a single valid vote;
26. The WILDIsland SG strives for consensus decisions. In case a consensus cannot be reached, decisions are taken with majority (more than 50% of all members present and voting) as described in the Rules of procedure of the Danube WILDIsland RRI (Annex 2.2).
27. Changes to the Rules of procedure of the Danube WILDIsland RRI or a decision to dissolve the RRI require a **majority of two-thirds of all members present and voting**.
28. All documents, which need online revision are circulated by the WILDIsland Coordination Unit (CoU) to all RRI members with a **four-week-revision time** and in case no objections are received, a 'silent assent' procedure applies, where a decision is 'deemed adopted', unless any member objects within the periods specified under the Rules of procedure of the Danube WILDIsland RRI (Annex 2.2).

IX. Financing

29. The income of the Danube WILDIsland RRI shall be derived from contributions from the members, contracts, external grants, donations, investments and from other sources approved by the WILDIsland SG within the Annual Working Plans of the RRI.
30. The WILDIsland SG adopts a baseline annual budget to cover the costs of the core staff and operations of the WILDIsland Coordination Unit (CoU).
31. In order to allow the Danube WILDIsland RRI to provide lasting structural and operational support to facilitate and improve the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the Danube region, all WILDIsland members should strive to provide sufficient and adequate contributions to the baseline annual budget to support a minimal operational structure for effective work in the region and take the necessary

steps to achieve and ensure financial sustainability of WILDIsland.

32. The Danube WILDIsland RRI members are encouraged to make voluntary contributions to the WILDIsland budget beyond the baseline annual budget, for specific programmes and activities of their particular interest.
33. The Danube WILDIsland RRI may receive donations and/or voluntary contributions from governmental, non-governmental and private sector, once approved by the WILDIsland SG.
34. The WILDIsland Coordination Unit (CoU) takes all the necessary measures to establish financial sustainability with resources from a variety of fairly distributed reliable sources, allowing for the development of its activities over the long term.

X. Reporting

35. WILDIsland Coordination Unit (CoU) reports annually to the WILDIsland SG at the Annual Meeting on the work progress, collaborations it has established, current financial status, including financial and work plans for the following year, using the format adopted by the Ramsar Convention Standing Committee. The Ramsar Secretariat and the DANUBEPARKS Management Board also have full access to these reporting documents upon request.
36. The Annual reports shall be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat in time for the preparation of the documents for the annual meeting of to the Ramsar Convention Standing Committees.
37. The expenses of the Danube WILDIsland RRI shall be controlled by the Audit Commission of the DANUBEPARKS Association as described by the Statute of the Association provided in Annex III.

XI. Use of the Danube WILDIsland RRI name and logo

38. The name and logo of the Danube WILDIsland RRI are protected. They should be used by any WILDIsland RRI member in conjunction with the Ramsar Convention logo for activities implemented within the framework of the Danube WILDIsland Initiative.
39. Any other organization or individual wishing to use the logo should obtain approval from the WILDIsland CoU.

Annex 2.1 – Danube WILDisland RRI Steering Group members

The Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative is currently composed of the following members:

Country members:

Focal area I: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine.

Hosting institution

- ICPDR

Coordination Unit

- DANUBEPARKS Association

Observers

- Observer Member-States
- Others (tbc, not (all) already contacted yet):
 - PA6 EUSDR
 - IUCN
 - WWF CEE
 - BirdLife International
 - Black Sea Wet RRI
 - Carpathian Wetland Initiative RRI
 - MedWet RRI
 - Alparcs
 - Carpathian network of protected areas
 - SavaParks
 - Elbeparks

Permanent Observers

- Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Annex 2.2

Rules of procedure of the Danube WILDIsland RRI Steering Group and Coordination Unit

Membership

- Rule 1. New members and observers of the WILDIsland SG shall be approved by a **three-fourths** majority of votes cast of members present at a WILDIsland SG meeting.
- Rule 2. Each member of the WILDIsland SG shall be entitled to be represented at meetings of the Committee by a Representative and an Alternate Representative. This proxy vote must be given in writing and handed to the WILDIsland Coordinator before the opening of the Annual Meeting. Each full member can hold a proxy vote for maximum one other full member.
- Rule 3. Voting. "Simple majority" means more than half of the total number of votes cast.
- Rule 4. "Members present and voting" means ordinary members present and casting an affirmative or a negative vote. Members abstaining from voting shall be considered as not voting.
- Rule 5. Changes to the ToR, the following Rules of Procedures or a decision to dissolve the RRI require a majority of **two-thirds of all members present and voting**.
- Rule 6. Conditions for the admission and participation of observers. The WILDIsland CoU, with the tacit consent of the WILDIsland SG members, may invite any other Ramsar Contracting Party or any country, or intergovernmental organization, or non-governmental organization, or persons, who are implementing the Ramsar Convention in the Danube region or are interested in the conservation and wise use of wetlands to send representatives to observe any WILDIsland RRI public meetings or particular agenda items. Observers may, upon the invitation of the Chairperson (see Rule 9.) and with the tacit consent of the meeting, actively participate, present information or report relevant to the meeting and objectives of the Convention, without the right to vote.
- Rule 7. WILDIsland SG members are encouraged to cover their own travel and accommodation costs to attend WILDIsland SG meetings whenever possible, yet relevant travel budget shall be foreseen and approved in the Annual Budget plans of the RRI.
- Rule 8. The WILDIsland CoU shall submit the measures and documents to the WILDIsland SG for adoption through on-line consultation or at face-to-face meetings.
- A 'silent assent' procedure applies on the on-line consultation, where decision is 'deemed adopted', unless any member objects within the specified period under Rule 20.**

Chair and meetings

- Rule 9. The WILDIsland SG meetings are chaired by the Danube WILDIsland Coordinator. In case the WILDIsland Coordinator cannot participate, the WILDIsland SG shall appoint one of its members to chair the meeting.
- Rule 10. An Annual Meeting of the SG or a session of a meeting shall be considered open and permit the debate to proceed if at least **half of the members** are present and voting. No decision shall be taken at a meeting in the absence of a quorum.
- Rule 11. The WILDIsland SG shall meet face-to-face at least **once every three years** prior to or during the Ramsar Convention CoP. WILDIsland members are encouraged to host additional face-to-face WILDIsland SG annual meetings. In case face-to-face meetings are not possible, impracticable or against health protocols, virtual WILDIsland SG meetings shall be carried out.
- Rule 12. The WILDIsland SG shall also hold regular online meetings in between the meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.
- Rule 13. An extraordinary session of the WILDIsland may be convened if a request, including an Agenda and drafts of the proposed decisions, is submitted in writing to the WILDIsland CoU **at least six weeks prior to the proposed date** of the extraordinary session and is supported by at least two of the Full Members. The invitation, including date, place, agenda and drafts of the proposed decisions, need to be sent out to all members **at least four weeks prior to the extraordinary session**.
- Rule 14. The WILDIsland CoU shall be responsible for the logistic and the organization of the meetings of the WILDIsland SG.
- Rule 15. Invitations announcing date and place shall be sent to all members **eight weeks prior** to the Annual Meeting;
- Rule 16. The agenda and the time of the meetings shall be determined by the WILDIsland CoU and sent to all members **four weeks prior** to the Annual Meeting; full members may propose amendments to the proposed agenda **up to one week before** the Annual Meeting.
- Rule 17. All working documents shall be distributed to all WILDIsland SG members at least **four weeks before** the opening of a meeting.
- Rule 18. A quorum of the meeting shall consist of at least **half of the Members**. No decision shall be taken at a meeting in the absence of a quorum.
- Rule 19. The minutes of each meeting shall be prepared by the WILDIsland Coordinator and distributed to all members within **eight weeks after** the closure of each meeting and shall be posted in the Danube WILDIsland RRI website.
- Rule 20. In absence of a regular face-to-face meeting of the WILDIsland SG, documents related to the functioning of WILDIsland, mainly annual reports, strategic work plans and provisional budgets, may also be adopted online. In this case, the WILDIsland Coordinator shall send the relevant documents for approval by the WILDIsland SG for comments. Comments and revisions shall be sent to WILDIsland CoU **within four weeks of the dispatch of the communication**, after which the WILDIsland CoU shall communicate all comments received to all members. **If no objection is received by the CoU within these 30 days of communication, the documents shall be considered**

as adopted and a notice of the adoption shall be given to all members. If a member objects to a document within the applicable time limit, the document shall be put to voting or otherwise referred to the next meeting of the WILDIsland SG.

- Rule 21. Any member may make a proposal to the WILDIsland Coordinator for a decision by electronic means. The WILDIsland Coordinator shall then send the proposal to the members for comments and revisions, following the procedure outlined in Rule.20.

Working language

- Rule 22. The working language of the Danube WILDIsland RRI and the WILDIsland SG shall be English. All documents shall be distributed in the official language.

Final provisions

- Rule 23. In matters not covered by the present Rules, the formal Statute of the DANUBEPARKS Association and the Rules of Procedure as adopted by the latest regular meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands shall apply, mutatis mutandis.
- Rule 24. Any amendments and revisions to these Rules of Procedure shall be adopted according to the voting procedure explained in of Rule 3.
- Rule 25. These Rules shall apply mutatis mutandis to the WILDIsland CoU.