

# MEASURES

## POLICY BRIEF

### SOLUTIONS AND BARRIERS – CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY FISH SPECIES AND THEIR HABITATS



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#### KEY POINTS:

- **Establish a Regional Water Council for the Mura and Sava Rivers**
- **Educate general public and stakeholders about the migratory fish species and their habitats**
- **Involve the local community in river basin management**
- **Improve international cooperation within the Mura River Basin**
- **Improve degraded river habitats for migratory fish species**

River and riverine habitats are considered as an integral part of home to the local people, important source of food and drinking water, place to socialize and much more. These, so called ecosystem services, can be sustainably exploited only in where all their functions and structures are preserved. Well-being of local community and their cultural heritage as well as conservation of biodiversity and migratory fish species depend on the water quality in the river and quality of the whole river corridor. We recommend the reestablishment of hierarchically organized Water Councils which should include local, important national and international stakeholders of all sectors.

Populations of Danube sturgeons are still in decline as are many other middle- and long-distance migratory fish species. Too many interruptions of connectivity between important habitats for migratory fish species exist in our rivers today. Heterogenic river beds with numerous and diverse spawning, wintering and feeding places of the past have now been regulated into a homogenic river channels with dams, where longitudinal sediment transfer, migration of organisms and creation of diverse habitats and other ecological processes are obstructed and cannot ensure the functioning of river ecosystems. Despite the clear and precise European legislation, the necessary and appropriate methodologies have still to be developed in Slovenia. These would enable scientists to monitor parameters for the ecological status of water and to compare different areas within the river basin as well as to propose further (international) measures, important for the conservation of the migratory fish species and their current ecological status in the river basins, to the managers (such as Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning). Different revitalization measures on rivers and their side channels are doomed to failure since they are not included in the long-term management plans and consequently the local communities and non-governmental organizations are left to try to manage them.

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### The commitment of ministries:

- International cooperation at the annual meetings of Regional Water Council
- Raising awareness about the conservation of migratory fish species and their habitats
- Longitudinal connectivity of rivers (eco-corridors) is included in management documents.
- National documents are continuously updated according to new research findings.
- Prevent absolute predominance of economic interests over sustainable exploitation of the river ecosystem services

### The commitment of local stakeholders:

- International cooperation at the annual meetings of Regional Water Council
- Sustainable use of natural resources
- Conservation of the cultural heritage
- Willingness to cooperate with other local stakeholders in the river basin

### The commitment of scientists:

- International cooperation at the annual meetings of Regional Water Council
- Raising awareness about the conservation of migratory fish species and their habitats
- Development of methodologies for fish monitoring and their migration and to ensure the data compatibility
- Transferring new research findings, knowledge and experiences to public and policy stakeholders
- Implementation of selected measures from European actions plans for conservation of the river ecosystems
- Scientific cooperation in planning of functional fish passages and monitoring of current ecological status
- Use and appropriate definitions of new ecological terms



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The listed participants were discussing about current status and possible solutions for migratory fish species and their habitats at the 1st MEASURES workshop with the on 27 March 2019 at the premises of the Fishing club (FC) Mura Paloma:

Mitja Bricelj (Ministry of the environment and spatial planning), Nataša Dolinar and Florjana Ulaga (Ministry

of the environment and spatial planning, Slovenian Environment Agency), Jan Potočnik Erzin (student of Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana (BF UL)), Mihael J. Toman (BF UL and The Slovenian Association for Water Protection), Marijan Gaber, Stojan Pfifer and Žan Pfifer (FC Mura Paloma), Damjan Habe (HD & H), Eva Horvat, Polona Pengal and Blaž Cokan (Institute REVIVO).