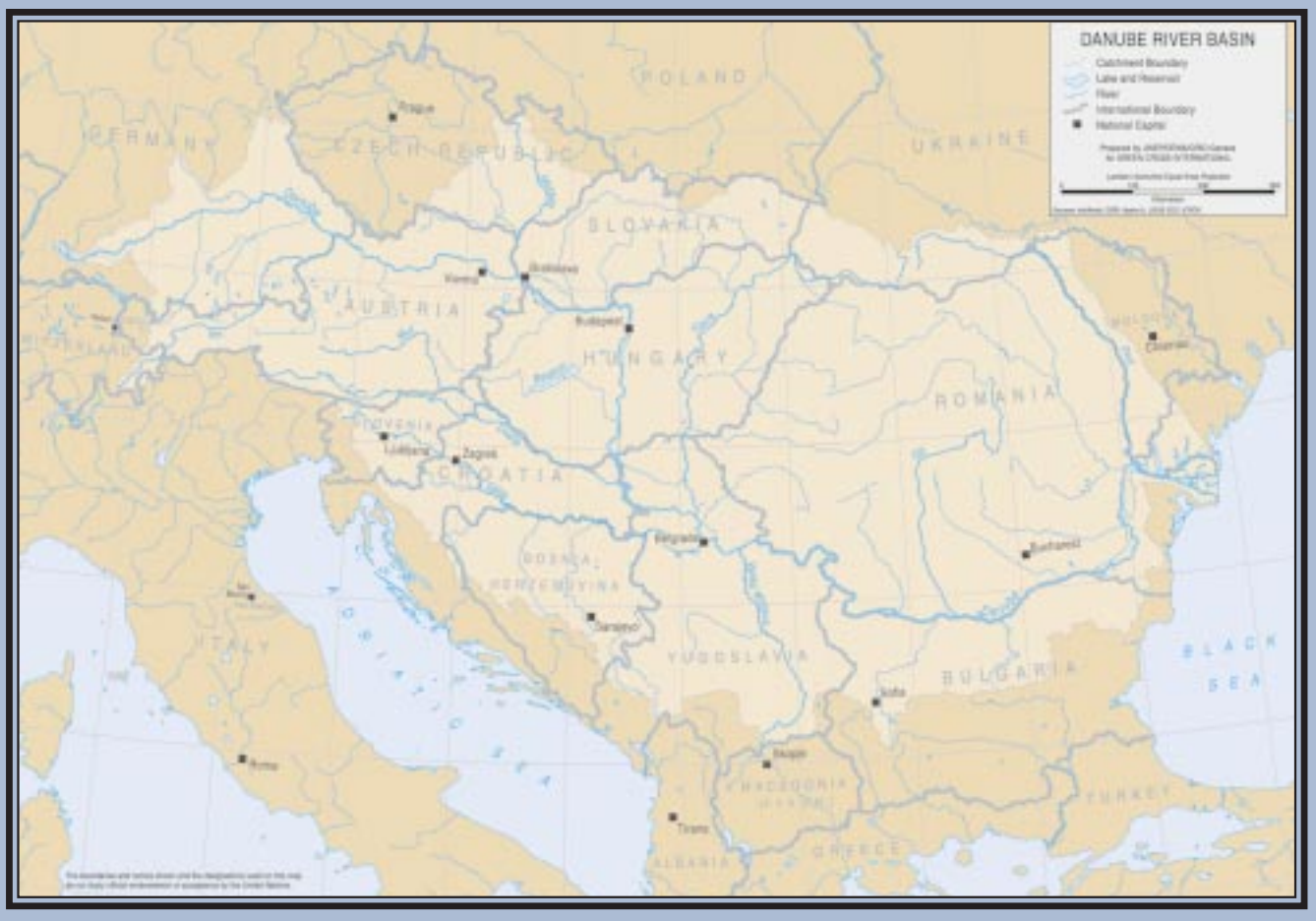
The Danube River Basin [5]

In a basin shared by 17 states, all aspects of water management have an international dimension, but the problems and potential conflicts to be addressed in the Danube Basin are primarily of a local nature. The aim of this project is to assist the resolution and prevention of local conflicts through dialogue and sharing experiences across borders. The planned accession of several CEE states to the European Union is an opportunity to review legislation in many areas, including environmental protection and standards and the responsibilities of transboundary management. The many political and economic transformations of the past decade have challenged these nations to re-evaluate the way in which natural resources are valued and managed, changed the roles of public authorities, civil society and the private sector, and necessitated the forging of new relationships with neighbouring countries. The main targets of this project will be the local authorities facing the challenges of decision-making and struggling to meet EU standards in conditions of less than full information and financial security, and the general public, for whom the right to information and participation in environmental policy development is now established, but who in reality often lack the knowledge and means needed to exercise these rights. Communication, sharing and benefiting from experiences of other states and regions, and encouraging the development of a transboundary perspective amongst the citizenry are the principal goals of this project.

[5] *This project proposal was prepared by Green Cross Hungary and Green Cross Romania, who will jointly manage the project. Green Cross is very fortunate to have had the support of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in developing this project. The Congress passed a resolution and agreed to a set of recommendations, and to the support of this project, at a session in May 2001. The Province of Gelderland in The Netherlands has been particularly supportive and will financially support a portion of the GCI Danube River Basin Project and provide valuable comparative expertise on the Rhine Basin.*



Basin States and % territory of total basin: Romania (29.35%), Hungary (11.9%), Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) (10.4%), Austria (10.3%), Germany (6.68%), Bulgaria (6.06%), Slovakia (6.01%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (4.85%), Croatia (4.37%), Ukraine (3.29%), Czech Republic (2.74%), Slovenia (2.1%), Moldova (1.55%), Switzerland (0.21%), Italy (0.09%), Poland (0.07%), Albania (0.02%).
Basin Area: 779,500 km²
Basin Population: approximately 80 million
Major Infrastructure: Tisza reservoir (Hungary), Iron Gate Hydroelectric Station (Romania/Yugoslavia) and the Gabcikovo Dam (Slovakia)

Background

The Danube is a 2860 km long river that flows across nine countries, its watershed of 817,000 km^2 extends on the territory of 17 countries – more than any other river basin in the world. The discharge varies (at Budapest) between 615 m^3/s (low water) and 8600 m^3/s (flood, 1965) with an average of 2400 m^3/s. The main tributaries of the Danube are (watershed in thousand km2): Tisza 157, Sava 100, Siret 45, Dráva 40, Morava 38, Prut 29, Morva 27, Olt 22, Inn 26 Vah 19, and Rába 18.

There are three clearly distinguishable sections of the Danube-river: 1) Upper-Danube, from the Black Forest to the Carpathian mountains, where a series of hydropower stations were built slowing the flow and creating problems of sedimentation. 2) In the Carpathian Basin the Danube flows through the West-Hungarian plain, meandering and, after the Danube Bend, arriving at the Great Hungarian Plain. Precious aquifers of drinking water are found here. Regulation and flood protection has an essential role and the stable riverbed is fixed by regulation works, which need constant maintenance and surveillance. 3) The Lower Danube extends from the Southern Carpathians to the Black Sea. The Danube flows into the Black Sea on Romanian Territory forming the Danube Delta, the largest wetland in Europe, declared a Biosphere Reserve of global importance due to the rich diversity of flora and fauna.

The basin contains many of the most important cities in the CEE region, such as Vienna, Budapest and Belgrade, picturesque towns like Salzburg, as well as heavy industry. Mining activities are concentrated in the mountainous regions. Several power plants (including nuclear stations, for example at Paks, in Hungary, and Cernavoda, in Romania) have been built along the Danube and its tributaries, using the river as cooling water.

Hungary and Romania

This project will concentrate on Hungary, the forerunner of the economic and political transformation of the region, and Romania which still struggles with the "ghosts" of the past, as the representative sample of the countries of Eastern Europe. Together, Hungary and Romania account for over 30% of the total basin area. Despite their economic differences, their interdependence was clearly demonstrated at the time of the Baia-Mare (Aurul) cyanide spill in early 2000 which wiped out most of the flora and fauna of the Tisza-river, a major tributary of the Danube. Hungary and Romania are both located almost entirely within the basin of the Danube river, which is therefore the single most important natural feature of the two states. The national Green Cross organizations, Green Cross Hungary and Green Cross Romania, are both deeply embedded in their respective societies and have the capacity, goodwill and knowledge to conduct a parallel assessment of the problems in these two countries, and identify common experiences which could be helpful to all the nations of the Danube basin in the future. The result of this extensive research and on the ground investigation, to be performed by top academic and private sector experts with the assistance of Green Cross volunteers, will be disseminated throughout the region. The support of the Council of Europe will facilitate communication with local authorities across the basin, and the project will be influenced by the Council's mandate to foster democracy and respect for human rights across Europe. Promoting effective and participative transboundary water management in the Danube basin is a natural means of achieving these goals.

Hungary

Hungary is located in Central Europe in the middle of the Carpathian basin. Its territory covers 94,000km^2; its population is 10.2 million. The Danube River represents 60% of the total water resources of the country, and 95% of all water resources of the country flow in rivers from originating in different countries. This puts Hungary in the least favorable situation in Europe regarding its ability to control its own water resources. The total length of rivers in Hungary is 2400 km, the length of the Hungarian part of the Danube is 460 km. Surface waters arrive in the country through 24 rivers and leave the country by three: the Danube, Tisza and Drava. Therefore, the quality of the water in Hungary is largely determined by the status of the water flowing into the country from abroad.

According to the EU system of water qualification (I being the best, *V* the worst) the quality of the water in Hungary is of *II-III* category. The quality of the water in the Tisza is worse than the water quality of the Danube, which is of category II. Pollution is usually the result of activities outside Hungary, from this point of view the catchment area of the Tisza is the most endangered (see Baia-Mare, Aurul incident) but there have also been industry related pollution cases in the direct Danube catchment area.

Most of the water used as drinking water and for industrial purposes comes from the rivers, partly from direct out take, however the main part (36%) comes as bank filtered water from the alluvions alongside the watercourses. The distribution of the available water sources is very unequal; there are no problems with quantity near the Danube but there is a shortage of water in the eastern part of the Great Hungarian Plain. National mean annual precipitation is 500-600 mm, but in the eastern part of the Great Plain it is below 400 mm.

Hungary is divided into 19 counties but the water and environmental administration is based on a sub-basin system: there are 12 water district directorates and environmental directorates. The institutional structure of Hungarian environmental and water management has been finalized and the central and regional levels of the system now function in a satisfactory manner. The tasks of regulating environmental protection and water management are divided between the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Transport and Water Management, with local level Environmental Agencies and regional level Water Directorates. There are two important laws in force, regulating these fields (Act 53 of 1995 on the Protection of the Environment and Act 57 of 1995 on Water Management) and some of the most important related EU legislation (such as the Drinking Water 98/83/EEC Directive and Urban Wastewater 91/272/EEC Directive) has already been transposed. The European Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) now gives general guidance for solving water related problems, and provides the benchmark for achieving required EU standards.

Local water supply
98% of the localities in Hungary have centralized drinking water supply systems. According to Hungarian standards, the quality of the water is satisfactory, however, 500 localities fail to meet the stricter standards of the EU Drinking Water directive. The government is currently engaged in a program for the amelioration of this situation.

Sewage and waste water treatment
Of the 3100 localities in Hungary only 983 have public sewage networks; as Hungary is committed to meeting the requirements of the EU regulation by 2015, the government is currently implementing a program targeting the building and modernizing of the wastewater treatment system.

Romania
Romania is located in the eastern side of Central Europe. There are three important elements that define the geographical position of Romania in Europe: The Danube River, The Black Sea and The Carpathian Mountains. Romania covers an area of 237,391 km^2. Out of the total boundary length of 3,190.3 km, the Danube river boundary represents 1,865.7 km, the territorial boundary 1,037.7 km and the sea boundary 287.9 km. The country is drained by a hydrographical network with permanent flow of about 76,000 km, with the total length belonging to the Danube basin. Mean annual precipitation decreases in intensity from west to east, from 600 mm to 500 mm in the Romanian Plain and under 400 mm in Dobrogea, to 1000 – 1400 mm in the mountain areas.

From the administrative point of view, Romania is divided into 41 counties, plus the capital, the municipality of Bucharest. The average area of a county is about 4,600 km^2, with an average population of 500,000 inhabitants.

According to the 1st of January 1999 census, Romania had a population of 22.5 million inhabitants, of whom 55% are living in urban areas. At the end of 1999, the gross domestic product of the country was about $34 Billion, representing a GDP per capita of $1,520. This is one of the lowest figures amongst the East and Central European Countries applying for membership of the European Union.

Water management (water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment)
Romania's water resources are relatively poor and unequally distributed in time and space, being formed of surface waters - inland rivers, lakes and reservoirs, and the Danube River - and of ground waters. Black Sea water resources, although very important, cannot be taken into account for the time being because of the technical and economic difficulties in seawater desalination. The ground waters, generally of better quality than the surface waters, are estimated at an available annual amount of 9 billion m^3, of which about 3 billion m^3 can be used under existing technical and economic conditions. Romania receives 85 billion m^3/year from the Danube River, but the possibilities for their actual use are limited because of the river's navigable

character. Thus, only 30 billion m^3/year can contribute to the water stock that is technically available for consumption.

The Danube flows alongside Romanian territory, with 37% of its length forming the Southern boundary of the country. The river has already acquired important pollutants before it evev reaches Romania, its water being included in pollution class II as defined by the Romanian Standard STAS 4706/1988 as it enters the country.

The quality of the Danube's water is adversely affected by diffuse and point source pollution throughout its catchment area. In particular, agricultural pollution and untreated discharge from municipal and industrial sources in Romania have a negative effect, both directly from riparian sources and indirectly via its tributaries.

Institutions

At the national level, the institutions responsible for the policy and strategy of the water sector are:

- The Ministry of Waters and Environmental Protection (MoWEP) - responsible for the adoption of the EU water quality Acquis in Romania. The Ministry is responsible for drawing up national water policy and the preparation of legislation and regulation within this field.
- The National Company "Romanian Waters" (Apele Romane SA) - responsible for the enforcement of the water management policy, under the co-ordination of MoWEP.
- The Ministry of Public Works, Transports and Housing - responsible for the quality of construction of drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities.
- Ministry of Health and Family - responsible for drinking water quality.
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests - responsible for the use and protection of water in the agricultural field.

At the local level, the Local or County Council is the authority granting development consent and is the owner or supervisor of water abstraction, supply and treatment infrastructure.

Environmental Legislation

- Law 137/1995 on Environmental Protection Law (framework law).
- Law 107/1996 on Water Law.
- Law 171/1997 for approval of the Plan of National Planning of the Romanian Territory – section II – Water.
- Governmental Decision 730/1997 for approval the NTPA 001 concerning the charging with pollutants of the wastewater discharges into water resources.
- Law 86/2000 for ratification of Aarhus Convention on public access to environmental information.
- Law 14/1995 for the ratification of Danube Convention on co-operation regarding protection and sustainable use of the River water.

Each year, MoWEP revises a Plan for Adoption of the EU Acquis in the field of environmental protection. The National Plan for Approximation of the National Legislation with the EU Acquis (draft in March 2000, finalised in May 2001) gives estimates for the transposition of the most relevant EU Directives. In the table below it is also shown the most expensive directives (regarding the implementation of their provisions).

Directive	Transposition	Implementation
Drinking Water (98/83/EEC)	2000	2015
Urban Wastewater (91/272/EEC)	2000	2030
Surface Water for Drinking Water (74/440/EEC)	2000	2015
Hazardous pollutants in the ground water (80/68/CEE)	2001	2015
Surface Water for Drinking Water (74/440/EEC)	2000	2015
Hazardous pollutants in the ground water (80/68/CEE)	2001	2015
Hazardous pollutants in the surface water (76/464/CEE)	2000	2030
Public access to the environmental information (90/313/CEE)	2000	2002
Directive regarding the environmental impact (85/337/CE)	2000	2002

Infrastructure

Local Water Supply

There is a vast differential between urban and rural settlements when it comes to centralised drinking water systems; all the 263 municipalities and towns have such systems, while only 17% of rural communities benefit from this service. This also represents a real difference between Hungary and Romania. The random distribution of water resources in the country's territory, an insufficient degree of regulation of river flows, and significant pollution of some inner rivers are all causes of the lack of sufficient water supply sources for parts of the country, especially during drought or very low temperature winters, when water can be interrupted for days and flows drastically reduced.

Sewerage and waste water treatment

At the 206 waste water treatment plants existing in Romania, only 77% of the total flow discharged through public sewerage networks is treated. 47 urban localities (including Bucharest, Craiova, Drobeta-Turnu-Severin, Braila, Galati and Tulcea) discharge waste water directly into rivers without a preliminary treatment. 86% of urban residents, and 11.2% of rural residents have access to public sewage facilities – again displaying a large difference between urban and rural.

Correlating the two water public utilities endowments, the population can be defined into three main categories:

1. population that benefits from both endowments – 51% of the total population;
2. population that benefits only from water supply (without sewerage) – 14% of the total population;
3. population that benefits from neither water supply nor sewerage – 35% of the total population.

Investments are needed to permit the gradual achievement of the standards required by the EU directives. These will be mostly in charge of the public sector (particularly local authorities) and will be a heavy burden for the public finances.

In Romania there are now 556 operators of public services, subordinated to the local public administration authorities or with private capital, from which 74 are independent administrative structures and 482 are commercial companies.

The private capital involvement and the achievement of strong and lasting partnerships between public and private sector are now at the beginning. There have already been some examples of privatization in this field, such as: in Bucharest and Ploiesti for the water supply and waste water system.

Main Problems and Issues

1. Lack of information, awareness and interest concerning water issues both at the general public and decision-makers level.
2. Privatisation.
3. Inadequate transboundary cooperation between neighbouring countries (especially Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia).

Characteristics of the Conflicts

1. Lack of information and awareness in water issues among the public and decision-makers.

The general public is not aware that water is not an inexhaustible resource. They also do not have enough information about the consequences of water pollution and waste. Water treatment requires a great deal of financing and these result in higher prices for the consumer, which in the absence of information can cause consumer anger and mistrust between the people and the authorities. The price of water is still very low (the lowest in the total household expenses, compared to the electricity or gas prices), therefore people do not pay enough attention to consumption rate, and a lot of water is wasted.

As part of a European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) loan in the Municipal Utilities Development Programme (MUDP) *I* and *II*, several big cities in Romania (Lasi, Timisoara, Craiova, Targu Mures, Brasov) benefit from investments in water infrastructure rehabilitation and modernisation. Water meters have been installed and the price of water increased, as a condition of the Loan Agreement between EBRD and the Government of Romania. Without a proper public information program, this situation generated anger and some conflicts occurred between the local population and water services operators. The results were unpaid water bills and even disconnection from the water distribution network.

The right of the person to have access to any public interest information can only be limited in special circumstances. In this respect, public authorities, according to their respective competencies, are required to ensure that citizens are informed about matters of public and personal interest. Both Hungary and Romania have ratified the Aarhus Convention on public access to environmental information, due to enter into force in November 2001. As well as Aarhus, the right to environmental information is translated into a number of laws and orders that specify the responsibilities and requirements for information provision. The water and environmental protection laws of Hungary

and Romania make provisions for public participation. The law requires public consultation of water users, riverside residents and the general public on all matters that affect their interests. Any decision should be taken only after having consulted these persons. However, despite these provisions, little consultation is actually carried out by the authorities.

A particularly important necessity is the provision of useful, up to date and filtered information for local government officials, who are not able to use either EU or national funds and training facilities for these issues. The particular strength of Green Cross in this field is that due to its structure it can provide information that is accessible only to organizations with a strong international background, while at the same time with the help of its local volunteers it can deliver this information right to the people primarily concerned, thereby reaching a whole string of small communities that otherwise might be resistant to outside influence.

Problems to be addressed by this project include:

- The need for a guide presenting the main steps to reach available funding sources for water infrastructure investments; in small and medium towns this information is often unavailable.
- The lack of awarness of many local decision makers are not advised of the present situation of water legislation.
- Difficulties and expenses faced in achieving the high water and environmental standards now sought in the region.
- Insufficient information on EU legislation and how to apply it.
- Lack of communication between local and regional authorities and their counterparts in other parts of the country and basin. This denies them the opportunity to gain from others' experiences and avoid duplicating mistakes. This lack of communication becomes dangerous for the environment and public health at times of transboundary emergency, and heightens the risk of conflicts. Cooperation and communication could greatly reduce the expense of inefficient water management.

2. Privatisation

In Hungary the process of privatisation in the water sector, as in the other sectors of the economy, has been going on for several years and is more advanced than in Romania. To begin with, companies privatised part of the infrastructure of the sanitation and waste water system of some Hungarian cities (Pécs Suez-Lyonnaise des Eaux 48%, Szeged Vivendi 49%) with the involvement of foreign capital. More recently, foreign investors have privatised the waste water and sewage treatment and public water companies of Budapest Fovarosi Csatornazasi Muvek (25+1 % a consortium formed by Lyonnaise des Eaux and RWE Aqua GmbH).

Between 1991 and 1999, water prices increased threefold in Hungary. State owned water providers were transformed into share-holding companies belonging to the municipal governments. Since they lack the means to invest themselves, some of the local governments have since privatised their water-works. One of the conditions of privatisation was the promise of reasonable prices and heavy investment in the infrastructure (e.g. in Budapest every year 10 percent of the 4, 400 kilometers pipeline was supposed to be reconstructed). Neither of these agreements have been kept; the companies are pushing for higher prices to satisfy their shareholders (in 2000 they requested a 25% increase that was refused by the local governments and they finally settled for a 13 % increase) and appear to have forgotten about their pre-contract promises. For a population already highly skeptical about the concept of private companies being responsible for basic human requirements like water, this has served to deepen anti-privatisation sentiments.

By informing citizens of their rights and encouraging them to participate in the decision-making process by enhancing dialogue with their local politicians, Green Cross hopes to encourage individual in local communities to use their power as voters and consumers to ensure that privatizing companies fulfil their pre-contract promises. At the same time, providing useful and objective information to local and regional authorities will enable them to carry out their role as regulators more effectively. Public authorities are often no match for major international private water companies in the negotiation of contracts and in regulating company activities; civil society should be informed and active about this question and insist on effective regulation by their elected officials and full accountability of the private sector.

In Romania, at the local level, the Local or County Council is the authority granting development consent and is the owner or supervisor of water abstraction, supply and treatment infrastructure. The rehabilitation and improvement of water infrastructure is a process that will no longer be supported by the national budget, it therefore requires funding and support through private capital. Privatisation of water services only began in 1999. The process, developed in Bucharest (concession contract completed in 2000) and Ploiesti, was very long and difficult, mainly because the authorities were not well informed or prepared. They did not have enough information about the national legislation in force and its compliance with EU legislation, private-public partnerships, available funding sources for investments in water infrastructure or different privatisation models and contracts.

At the general public level
Green Cross will encourage the involvement of the local population in environmental matters to avoid conflicts arising from decisions that were taken without the consent or even awarness of the citizens. In situations where conflicts have already emerged, for example due to price increases or lack of service, Green Cross can help facilitate discussion and resolution between parties and provide a channel of communication to relay public concerns to the private sector.

At the local and regional authorities level
The local authorities and their subordinate institutions need to have a clear idea of the risks and benefits, both political and economic, of investing in the water sector, either by inviting companies to participate in the privatisation or by using their own means to improve water services.

By outlining the national and international framework of regulation, providing useful examples from other cities in the region and by assessing the present state of affairs and the attitude of the consumers towards privatisation, Green Cross intends to help the local authorities perform this cost-benefit analysis, engage the public, and make the best decision for their cirmcumstances.

3. *Inadequate transboundary cooperation with neighbouring countries (Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia)*

The Tisza River ecological catastrophe involving the Aurul mining company in Baia Mare, Romania, has been called the new "Chernobyl" and has presented a multidimensional crisis for Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia. According to European Commissioner Chris Patten, "The Tisza River disaster was not simply a Hungarian or Romanian problem; it affected all of Europe. The Somes, Lapus, and Danube rivers suffered a very serious environmental tragedy which destroyed an entire ecosystem in a matter of days."

The government reaction to the crisis in Romania and Hungary was slow, uncoordinated and inefficient. The environmental authorities had no emergency plans for such a disaster and failed to contact the EU for immediate technological assistance in cleaning up the spill. Instead, great pains were taken to convince the public that the media was exaggerating the scope and impact of the accident. To make matters worse, in some cases the media did publish inaccurate information. In this context, it became easier for Romanian parliamentarians to shirk responsibility and blame Hungary for attempting to tarnish Romania's public image.

The Romanian civil society reaction was also poor. Although few environmental NGOs expressed their concerns, there was no unified strong protest at the national level.

The bitter lesson learned both by Hungary and Romania from this conflict is that water management requires close co-operation and information exchange between the countries of the Danube River basin. The decision makers have to take into account the possibilities presented by EU adhesion and the water management directives of the European Union, which highlight transboundary co-operation of whole watersheds. It would be useful to look at the example of transbounary pollution management in the Rhine basin, which was belatedly put into practice also after a major industrial accident.

Project Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1 Conduct an analysis of the level of information, understanding and awareness of the public and decision-makers with regard to water issues and privatisation in the water sector.
OBJECTIVE 2 Inform the public, particularly with regard to transboundary aspects of water, and inform the local authorities and decision makers with regard to the implications of privatisation of water services. The precise targets for information distribution will be determined by the results of the awareness analysis.
OBJECTIVE 3 Disseminate information and experience gained at the regional level (Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria) to public authorities that will be involved in privatisation of the water sector in the future, particularly in Romania.
OBJECTIVE 4 Facilitate improved transboundary cooperation between Romania and Hungary through initiation of a "Public Reaction Committee" for rapid response of civil society groups in case of ecological disasters.

The project aims to facilitate a better dialogue between local authorities and the general public, by providing stimulus and support for the information and consultation campaign that the authorities should conduct, in view of the rehabilitation and privatisation of water services. A better-informed and more aware public will increase trust and confidence and reduce the potential for conflict in this period of transformation.

Expected Results

- An increased level of understanding and awareness in the general public regarding the situation of the water sector.
- Better informed authorities and decision makers with regard to the implications of privatisation of water services.
- Reduced potential for conflict in the water sector.
- National and regional dialogue initiated between Hungary, Romania and neighbouring countries in order to exchange experience, share lessons learned and discuss possibilities to prevent and take common action against future possible eco-catastrophes (e.g. "Aurul" Baia Mare).
- Initiation of regional dialogue, with the full involvement of civil society, on methods to prevent and respond to future eco-catastrophes.

Activities

In Hungary
The focal points of the project in Hungary and Romania are identical, but due to the fact that the privatisation process is more advanced in Hungary the approach will concentrate more on lessons learned than on the dissemination of basic information.

Objective 1
Action 1: Elaboration of a questionnaire - Impact at the local level
Green Cross Hungary will target representatives of the general public, local decision-makers and organizations operating water services (foreign owned and Hungarian joint stock companies, LTD's, public utility companies, etc.) to receive first-hand information about the most important water management problems. Questions will be designed to fit the varying needs of the regions of:
- Budapest (1,930.000 inhabitants)
- Szeged (169,000 inhabitants)
- Pecs (163,000)

representing the Centre, South East and South West of the country, respectively.

Objectives 2 and 3
Action 1: Elaboration and distribution of an information handbook – Impact at the national level
The results of the questionnaire described above will form the basis of an information handbook targeting local decision-makers and including:

- relevant laws, including an assessment of EU Regulation
- available funding sources for investments in water infrastructure
- the current situation of water service privatisation and its efficiency (using case studies)
- the social implications of the actual situation and the possibilities for the improvement of the operation of both public and privatised water services
- information and comparative assessment of the Rhine basin experience.

Action 2: Elaboration and distribution of an information leaflet - Impact at the national level
The results of the questionnaire will also form the basis of an information leaflet directed at the general public in the regions examined, and particularly the localities that are considering the privatisation of their water-works. The leaflet will include:

- Brief and comprehensible overview of local situation and the privatisation question.
- Information on public rights to involvement in the decision-making process, and means to exercise them.
- Information on the availability of legal and political remedies in case of harm
- Frequently asked questions
- Contacts for environmental and social welfare organizations

Action 3: Roundtable – Impact at the national level
A roundtable consultation will be organised for the representatives of local authorities, water associations, and private companies of the chosen pilot areas (Budapest, Szeged, Pécs). This will result in the drafting of a resolution that will be presented to the government and publicized.

In Romania
For objectives 1, 2 and 3, Green Cross Romania has chosen as pilot sites four counties – Maramures, Salaj, Alba and Cluj. The selection criteria for these counties included:
- The small and medium sized towns within the 4 counties will be included in the MUDP III program. They will benefit also from an EBRD loan (guaranteed by the Romanian government) to improve and rehabilitate their water infrastructure. This process should be preceded by an information campaign for the general public, explaining the reasons why it is necessary and the consequences (e.g. higher price for water). In order to avoid conflict situation and learn from the experiences of other cities and counties, Green Cross would like to help and support the authorities in implementing this process according to the law.
- Their proximity to the Hungarian border. This enables easier information exchange and transboundary co-operation.
- Green Cross Romania has already developed contacts with experts, local authorities and NGOs in these counties.

The average population of the 4 counties is: 284,000 for Maramures, 497,000 for Cluj; 233,000 for Alba;

107,000 for Salaj (see map attached)
The target groups in each of the counties are represented by:

- local authorities: Prefecture, County Council, Mayor and Local Council of the Capital County, Mayor and Local Council of 4 major communes.

The 4 capitals of the counties are as follows: Baia Mare for Maramures county, Zalau for Salaj county, Alba Iulia for Alba county and Cluj Napoca for Cluj. The communes will be selected following GCR consultation with the authorities of the counties, NGOs and experts.

- general public: associations of private apartment owners, inhabitants of the 4 selected communes

In order to reach its objectives GCR designed a set of actions to impact local, national and regional level.

Objective 1

Action 1: Elaboration of a questionnaire for the public and decision-makers in the 4 selected counties - Impact at the local level

In order to assess the level of information, concerns and interest in water issues of both the general public and local authorities, GCR will elaborate a questionnaire and distribute 2400 copies (600 questionnaires per county). The questionnaire will be designed by a sociologist with the assistance of GCR water experts, in two versions, one for the urban and another for rural areas. They will be distributed with the help of volunteers from local NGOs and students to the target groups described above.

Specifically, the results of the questionnaire will provide information on:

- the view of the local population and authorities regarding water as a resource and problems they are facing
- their level of understanding about the consequences of rehabilitation of water services
- their level of understanding and awarness of the legal aspects and their right to be informed and consulted

Question data will serve to elaborate information leaflets, develop further projects, elaborate new policies and strategies for water or amend and improve existing ones.

Action 2: Elaboration of a questionnaire for the local authorities and decision makers of the 4 counties - Impact at the local level

The purpose of the questionnaire is to identify the level of understanding and awareness of the local authorities with regard to the implications of privatisation in the water sector and to identify the gaps in information. They will be distributed to 500 individuals in the Prefecture and County Councils of Maramures, Salaj, Alba, Cluj, the Town Hall and Local Council of Baia Mare, Zalau, Alba Iulia and Cluj Napoca and the selected communes. Information and opinions will also be sought from local water companies and other institutions involved in the water sector. The data will be used to create an information handbook for the authorities and key stakeholders in the water sector.

Objective 2

Action 1: Elaboration of an information leaflet - Impact at the local level

Based on the information provided by the data collection, GCR will elaborate an information leaflet to respond to the specific problems identified at the public level. This activity has an important public awareness role, aiming to stir the interest of the target groups. To increase dissemination, the leaflets will also be distributed by the local authorities.

Action 2: Elaboration and distribution of an information handbook - Impact at the local and national levels

The target groups recipients of the handbook are the local authorities of the 4 counties and the decision makers of the local water companies and institutions involved in water sector privatisation.
The main topics of the information handbook will include:

- the privatisation of water services.
- case studies, success stories – including the Rhine comparison.
- public-private partnerships and the existing legislation.
- available sources of funding for investments in water infrastructure.

The launching of the handbook will be organised as a public event with the involvement of the media. As a result of this activity, it is expected that local authorities will be better informed with regard to the privatisation of the water sector. An evaluation of the handbook will be carried out through open discussions during the round tables. If successful, the handbook can be reproduced and distributed for the use of local authorities in other counties in Romania.

Action 3: Organise consultation / round tables - Impact at the local and national levels

After the information materials have been produced, four consultation/roundtables will be held, one in each of the counties. The purpose of this activity is to gather all the key stakeholders - local authorities, water operators, experts and the private sector - in the county to analyse the potential for conflicts in the privatisation process, to identify the challenges and determine the parameters and objectives for the future of the water infrastructure sector in Romania. The opportunity will also be used to disseminate the

information materials and handbook.
In order to facilitate exchange of information and experience, representatives of local authorities from counties more advanced in the process of privatising water companies (e.g. Timisoara, Craiova, Ploiesti, Bucharest) will be invited to share their experience with their colleagues from Maramures, Alba, Salaj and Cluj counties.

Joint Activities of Hungary and Romania

Objective 1
Action 1: Regional conference to facilitate the dissemination of the lessons learned and the experience gained in privatisation of the water sector amongst the neighbouring countries (Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria) – Impact at the regional level
A two-day conference will be convened in Bucharest, inviting 100 participants from Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Representatives of Green Cross International and other organisations will also attend the meeting. Participants will be represented by parliamentarians, private investors and representatives of stakeholder groups from the different countries of the Lower Danube River Basin. They will share ideas and concerns, and assess the real problems on the ground. Representatives of the three private foreign companies which won the privatisation tenders for the water services in Bucharest, Budapest and Sofia, will be invited to present the lessons learned, what went well and/or wrong in the privatisation process, consequences for the consumers, impact on citizens and on the "water world" within each of the three countries. It is hoped that the participants will agree on a "Basin Declaration" and a set of recommendations to be presented to the authorities in different regions.

Objective 4
Action 1: Bilateral Conference - Impact at the regional level
A bilateral conference and working group will be organised by GCR and GCH in order to provide a framework for the establishment and co-ordination of a "Public Reaction Committee" for rapid reaction, information and mediation in case of ecological disasters. The conference will be held in Budapest and will include all the important stakeholders in the water sector, as well as environmental NGOs, experts, government officials, environmental protection agencies, mass media, managers of the "hot spot" industrial and mining units, and local authorities. All of these groups will be invited to either join or advise the Public Reaction Committee.

Project Partners

- The Federation of Romanian Local Authorities
- The Patronage of the Public Services in Romania
- The Romanian Water Association (ARA)
- The Agency for Development of Water Infrastructure (ADIA),
- The Ministry for Water and Environmental Protection
- The Romanian National Water Authority "Apele Romane"
- The Environmental Protection Agencies from the 4 selected counties
- Universities and schools from the pilot counties
- Local active environmental groups
- Local politicians
- The Hungarian Ministry for Transport and Water
- The Hungarian Ministry for Environmental Protection
- The Hungarian National Water Authority
- NGOs and Universities in the pilot regions
- The International Commission for the Danube River Basin
- The Province of Gelderland in the Netherlands
- The Council of Europe

Follow-Up

- A report on cooperation over water resources in the Lower Danube Basin will be produced. This will be integrated in a document prepared by Green Cross International together with the reports from the other five basins that will be presented at the 3rd World Water Forum
- The information and results of the project will be available on GCR and GCI websites, and could serve as a model for possible co-operation between countries (Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania), counties (Maramures, Salaj, Alba and Cluj) and different stakeholders with common problems and interests.
- A strategy for the Public Reaction Committee will be developed. Following the termination of this project, in order to ensure continuity of transboundary cooperation. Further development of PRC and attraction of additional member countries (e.g. Yugoslavia) will be a main follow-up activity.

The Public Reaction Committee will be a "civil society group" aimed at providing an avenue for raising local public awareness. It will provide a problem solving approach, constructive dialogue and structural framework for: the local and national actors involved in creating and implementing these plans; the EU and other international entities wishing to contribute to emergency planning and regional compliance with/accession to EU membership and; national, regional, and international partnerships and experts. It will also develop strategies for civil society engagement in and effective and coordinated response to emergency situations and the promotion of measures to prevent them in the future.