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Joint Danube Survey 3: International research expedition on the Danube launched

Two ships will carry an international team of scientists on a research expedition over 2,375 kilometres to survey Europe's second-biggest river. The "Joint Danube Survey 3" links groundbreaking science with environmental policy on an international scale.

REGENSBURG/VIENNA, 13 August 2013 (International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River) - The Joint Danube Survey 3 (JDS3) was launched today in Regensburg, Germany. For the next six weeks scientists will test the water quality of the river and look at animals and plants; from chemical substances to sediment, from larger fish to microscopic bacteria. The research will be conducted by an international team of 20 scientists, travelling 2,376 kilometres through 10 countries. The JDS is carried out every six years – JDS1 was in 2001 and JDS2 in 2007. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) coordinates the project.

"A river basin as diverse as that of the Danube is a complex and dynamic system and understanding the ecology of such a system is difficult", says ICPDR President Ermina Salkičević-Dizdarević. "The Joint Danube Survey will help us to improve our understanding of the Danube and its needs. The findings of this survey will feed directly into scientific papers and management plans - and they will help to raise public awareness."

The team of scientists will collect information on parameters not covered by the ongoing monitoring, such as pollutants from pharmaceuticals or radioactive isotopes. As the ships will travel along the course of the river, all collected data will come from the same source and is readily comparable. This is important because often data from different sampling locations needs to be harmonized before it can be compared.

"I am happy that we managed to secure the support from some of the leading laboratories across Europe", says ICPDR Executive Secretary Ivan Zavadsky. "The Joint Danube Survey will refine our picture of the Danube and the measures it will take to protect and sustain this beautiful river in both environmental and economic dimensions."

Laboratories across Europe will carry out chemical analyses. Corporate partners, such as Coca-Cola and Donauchemie, support the JDS3. Public events in all riparian Danube countries will ensure that everybody can get involved with JDS3. All public events are announced on the official JDS3 website www.danubesurvey.org, where you can also find a blog with updates from the ships.

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Background Information

JDS3: What will be tested and how?

Two ships will lead the expedition. Serbia's Argus, the main laboratory ship during both previous surveys, was recently refurbished and includes instruments such as a centrifuge, sieving machine, microscope, incubators and refrigerators. Romania's Istros is a coastal and river research ship with six cabins, a lab and dining room. In addition, two Austrian vessels, the Wien and Meßschiff IV, will be used for fish sampling. A total of 68 sites will be sampled, with one or two sites daily on average. All sample containers will be prepared, labelled and pre-packed before the survey. Each sampling site takes about four hours. Many samples will be tested on-board the ships, while others will be shipped to participating laboratories throughout Europe.

Sampling at JDS3 stations may include up to five different sample types – water, sediment, biology, suspended particulate matter (SPM) and biota (fish). The experts will conduct numerous tests, looking for animals and plants, from larger shellfish to microscopic bacteria, and chemical and hazardous substances. They will monitor physico-chemical parameters such as temperature, dissolved oxygen and pH, as well as radioactive contaminants. The study of hydromorphological characteristics will include activities such as sediment testing, creating inventories of harbours, sand bars and gravel banks, and measuring water velocity. Thirty two sites were chosen for monitoring fish.

About the Danube River Basin

The Danube River Basin is Europe's second largest river basin, with a total area of 801,463 km². It is the world's most international river basin as it includes the territories of 19 countries: Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine, with catchment areas larger than 2000 km²; and Switzerland, Italy, Poland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania with smaller areas. The Danube River Basin is home to 81 million people with a wide range of cultures, languages and historical backgrounds.

About the ICPDR

The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) is an International Organisation consisting of 14 cooperating states and the European Union. The ICPDR deals not only with the Danube itself, but also with the whole Danube River Basin, which includes its tributaries and the ground water resources. The ultimate goal of the ICPDR is to implement the Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC) and make it a living tool. Its ambitious mission is to promote and coordinate sustainable and equitable water management, including conservation, improvement and rational use of waters for the benefit of the Danube River Basin countries and their people. The ICPDR pursues its mission by making recommendations for the improvement of water quality, developing mechanisms for flood and accident control, agreeing standards for emissions and by assuring that these are reflected in the Contracting Parties' national legislations and applied in their policies.

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