

Sava River Basin

No river ends at its banks. Each river and its basin has own diverse habitats and species that enrich life in the basin – life of people of different cultures, nations and countries.

So does the Sava River. Along 944 km of its course and over 97,713 km² of the basin area, it runs through four states: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. Even more – the Sava River also connects three capitals of these four countries: Ljubljana in Slovenia, Zagreb in Croatia, and Belgrade in Serbia. Through the Danube, Sava River is a part of the Black Sea drainage basin, and represents the Danube's third longest tributary with the highest flow rate of all, which means that the management of the Sava River Basin has a significant influence to the Danube River Basin area.



From transboundary approach to sustainable water management

The recognition of water as being essential for our lives has increased in previous years – it has become a deficient and precious resource. Both facts raised the global awareness that water should be managed in a systematic, sustainable and transboundary manner. This awareness caused changes in a way the countries consider water issues. Many directives and agreements have been adopted by several countries with the purpose to establish basis for sustainable water management which could bring better quality of life. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, have acknowledged the importance of the Sava River Basin as a transboundary matter regulated by special agreement.

Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin

Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin (FASRB) is the basic and the most important document emphasizing the importance of transboundary treatment and cooperation of governments, institutions and individuals for sustainable development of the Sava River Basin area. It was signed on December 03, 2002, and ratified on December 29, 2004, by four riparian countries: Republic of Slovenia, Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Transboundary cooperation under the FASRB follows the particular objectives:

- to establish an international regime of navigation;
- to establish a sustainable water management;
- to prevent and/or limit hazards, such as floods, droughts, ice, accidents, and eliminate and/or reduce their consequences.

The cooperation is based on the following principles:

- sovereign equality, territorial integrity, mutual benefit, and good faith;
- mutual respect of national legislation, institutions and organizations;
- cooperation in accordance with the European Water Framework Directive (WFD);
- regular exchange of information within the basin, on the water regime, navigation regime, legislation, organizational structures, administrative and technical practices;
- cooperation with international organizations (such as ICPDR, Danube Commission, UN/ECE, institutions of the European Union, etc.);
- securing integrity of the water regime in the basin, reduction of transboundary impacts caused by economic and other activities.

FASRB stipulates the following forms of transboundary cooperation:

- creation and realization of joint plans for the basin;
- preparation of development programs for the basin;
- harmonization of national regulation with EU regulation;
- creation of additional protocols to the FASRB.

The above stated will be developed to achieve long-term goals of improved quality of surface and groundwater in the basin.

International Sava River Basin Commission

The International Sava River Basin Commission (Sava Commission) was established by the FASRB, and was given the capacity for decision-making in the field of navigation and providing recommendations on all other issues. Sava Commission is financed through regular annual contributions of the Parties to the FASRB.

Key features of the Sava Commission approach are:

- **cohesion:** promoting cooperation among four riparian countries;
- **integration:** spatially - involving the whole basin, and by scope of work - including both elements of *sustainability* and *development* activities;
- **transparency:** based on information and public participation;
- **accordance with EU directives**, such as: WFD, Floods Directive, etc.;
- **subregionality:** enabling a finer resolution of results, if compared to a regional one;
- **pragmatism** in terms of the results, such as: joint plans, development programs, harmonized regulation, protocols, integrated systems, awareness raising, etc.

Structure

Sava Commission is composed of representatives of the Parties nominated by their governments. Each country has two representatives: Member and Deputy Member. The executive and administrative body of the Sava Commission is the Secretariat, consisted of officials dealing with the following fields of expertise:

- Navigation;
- Integrated River Basin Management and Water Planning;
- Protection of Water and Aquatic Ecosystem;
- Legal and General Affairs, and
- Economic and Financial Affairs.

To reach objectives in accordance with the FASRB and ensure the highest possible level of expertise and knowledge, activities are supported by two kinds of expert groups:

- Permanent Expert Groups, for River Basin Management (RBM), Accident Prevention & Control, Flood Prevention, and Navigation;
- *Ad-hoc* Expert Groups, for legal issues, Geographical Information System (GIS), as well as hydrological and hydro-meteorological issues.

Tasks

Activities of the Sava Commission refer to six main tasks:

- a) coordination in:
 - preparation of Sava RBM Plan according to EU WFD;
 - establishment of integrated Information System (GIS), River Information Service (RIS), and Monitoring, Forecasting and Early Warning Systems;
 - preparation and realization of studies and projects;
 - development of protocols;
 - majority of activities in the fields of navigation and water management;
- b) proposition of the Sava RBM Plan and priority projects;
- c) decision making and harmonization of regulation of the countries in the field of navigation;
- d) cooperation with international and national organizations;
- e) issuing documents and publications, and
- f) provision of public participation.

These tasks are performed through the work of the Sava Commission and its Secretariat, meetings of the expert groups, development of studies and projects. Once per year, the Sava Commission submits the report on its work to the Parties. The work of the Sava Commission is evaluated at the meetings of the Parties, which are organized every two years.



INTERNATIONAL SAVA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION



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**Transboundary cooperation
for sustainable development
of the Sava River Basin**