

## **MOLDOVA: Collaboration across borders for the Danube**

This year saw by far the biggest and best Danube Day celebrations Moldova has seen, with a *Danube Week* of festivities. As the 2006 ICPDR President, the spotlight was on Moldova to host a grand celebration and they did not disappoint. Cross-border ministerial events, cultural and awareness raising celebrations, river clean-up days and actions to improve water quality ensured it was a day of celebration and achievement, involving over 6000 people.

The focus was the Prut River, Moldova's western border with Romania, where Environment Ministers from both countries, Constantin Mihailescu and Sulfina Barbu, jointly opened Danube Day at the Costesti-Stinca Reservoir. The Ministers, along with other government and civil society representatives and local people were joined by officials from the international community: ICPDR, UNESCO, World Bank, business and ambassadors from Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Ukraine.

To symbolise the continuity of life, the Ministers released fish into the Prut waters and balloons into the air above – watched with great fascination by local children. Competitions, concerts, dancing, a fly-by with a "Together for the Prut River" banner and conservation activities ensured everyone joined in the celebratory spirit. The faces of local children, above-all, illustrated the genuine joy and excitement of the day. For a short time, the border separating the two countries was ignored as Ministers and local people joined in the traditional dances and shared champagne.

The ceremony marked the start of the *Prut Expedition*, a 4-hub tour along almost the length of the country. From Costesti, government officials, representatives from NGOs, environmental agencies, the ICPDR, plus journalists, travelled to Ungheni in central Moldova; on to Leova and finally Cahul in the south. Some of them joined the Romanian celebrations in Galati. Organised by the State Hydro-meteorological Service and the Ministry, the aim was both scientific and awareness-raising. En- route, improvements were made to water

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**Danube Day: more than just water!**

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quality monitoring; pollution and flood damage recorded and a public clean-up of local sites took place. In towns visited by the delegation and also villages (in Glodeni, Falesti and Hincesti) public crowds and officials greatly enjoyed festivals in the searing heat, with conservation tasks, exhibitions, craft fairs, horse racing, youth camps and concerts. Wide media coverage ensured thousands heard the Danube message.

Other actions included the *Me and the Danube* art/essay competition run by *Environment and Health* NGO. An almanac of the Prut and Danube Rivers will also soon be printed, covering the rivers' social, economic and ecological importance in the past 200 years (by the Moldovan Association of Environmental and Ecological Tourism Journalists).

**“The past two days are worth remembering for years to come ... the extraordinary mutually constructive initiative, enthusiasm and determination to further build up cross border solidarity to the benefit of both people and the river environment.”**

Constantin Mihailescu, ICPDR President 2006, Minister of Ecology and Natural resources

## Partners

Ministry of Ecology & Natural Resources • State Hydro-meteorological Service • Biodiversity Office within the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources • State Water Concern • Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration • Romanian Ministry of Environment and Water Management • Romanian Waters National Administration • *Padurea Domneasca* Scientific Reserve • Moldovan Environmental Movement • Ungheni and Leova branches of the Moldovan Environmental Movement • Centre for Ecological Consulting (Cahul) • Eco Counselling Centre Galati (ECCG), Romania • REC Moldova • The Prut NGO Coalition • *Vidoinf* NGO • Environment and Health NGO • *Speranta* Women's Club • Pro Agenda Local 21 NGO • local authorities from Costesti village and Riscani, Ungheni, Leova and Cahul Districts • ICPDR • UNDP/GEF • World Bank • UNESCO • Coca-Cola Moldova •

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