

Danube Basin: Is the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive implementation delivering results for the people, the economy, and the environment of the Danube region?

A Wastewater Management Assessment Based on the World Bank's Engagement



Conclusions of the assessment

This limited review of wastewater management in Danube region under European Union (EU) water policies shows that, despite several challenges, the UWWTD has indeed delivered results for the people and environment in Danube region. The share of wastewater treated according to the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD) requirements has shown major improvement since 2004, demonstrating the impact of massive investment efforts. As a result, in the past 20 years, there has been a noticeable emission reduction of organic pollutants and nutrients. Continued improvement can be expected proportional to an increase in compliance with UWWTD and other relevant water directives in newer Danube River Basin (DRB) member states. The review points out several challenges associated with implementing the UWWTD. Implementation capacity, key for optimal development of wastewater infrastructure and better absorption of EU funds, is often neglected and insufficiently prepared. Necessary tariff increases, which are a consequence of investment in new infrastructure and related operation and maintenance cost increases, trigger affordability issues for the bottom 40 (B40) percent of population in some countries, prompting a need to develop adequate subsidy and transfer mechanisms.