

group, investigating the effects of land use, management practices, and climate change on water, sediment, and nutrient/contaminant fluxes. Our work aims to assess and quantify human-induced changes in fluvial systems, further providing insights for sustainable river basin management.

I am author of more than 30 papers in scientific journals, first author of one book, and further contributed to 10 book

chapters; Board work and speakership in 9 organisations such as the 'IAG/AIG Internat. Assoc. of Geomorphologists (working group leader 'Connectivity in Geomorphology')', the EGU/European Geoscience Union (scientific officer), and the ÖK-IAD - Austrian Committee Danube Research (management committee).

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New IAD Expert Group: Danube River education

The Danube River and its tributaries are facing significant ecological challenges, affecting the ecological status of the river as well as biodiversity in the river and its floodplains. However, there remains a gap in **effectively communicating such environmental knowledge and awareness to a broader public**. The International Association for Danube Research (IAD), a key player in promoting sustainable management of the Danube River Basin, can expand its impact by enhancing public environmental education efforts.

To bridge this gap, an Environmental **Danube River Education Expert Group (DEEG)** within IAD has been established. This expert group is dedicated to raising public awareness, fostering emotional connections of local residents and tourists with the Danube, and empowering local communities to participate in the protection and restoration of the river and its ecosystems. The European Commission's initiative to reconnect citizens with freshwater ecosystems aligns closely with this objective, positioning IAD to contribute to wider EU goals.

While IAD has traditionally focused on research and policy, the value of these insights is limited without public communication and involvement. An Environmental Education Task Force could **transform complex scientific data into engaging, accessible content for a wider audience**. The aim is to support a broad range of educational initiatives, including programs for schools, community outreach, exhibitions, workshops, and multimedia campaigns. By collaborating with local stakeholders such as schools, NGOs, nature parks, and governments, this effort envisages far-reaching effects across the entire Danube region.

The environmental Danube River Education Expert Group hence serves as a catalyst for coordinated educational efforts, ensuring that local activities are linked and scaled throughout the basin. By initiating and developing timely educational projects, the DEEG enables the creation of an interlinked se-

ries of initiatives that foster community-driven conservation efforts. This would include a variety of educational formats, such as school programs, interactive exhibitions, and public events, aimed at diverse audiences across different regions.

In summary, the DEEG will help IAD to significantly increase its visibility and strengthen its role in promoting sustainable practices and synergies among the projects. The **Environmental Danube River Education Expert Group (DEEG)** will bridge the gap between scientific research and public engagement, creating a lasting, community-focused movement for the conservation and protection of the Danube River Basin. This initiative would ensure that the association's efforts reach beyond the scientific community and foster a deeper connection between people and the river based on environmental knowledge and emotional linkages to the Danube's unique nature.



**Expert Group leader:
Dr. Gabriela Costea**

Dr. Gabriela Costea is a research associate at the Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB) in Berlin, specialising in aquatic ecology and the ecosystem services of rivers and floodplains. She has previously

worked for 16 years as a curator at the Natural Science Museum Complex in Galati, Romania, where she developed exhibitions and environmental education programs that made scientific knowledge about the Danube's biodiversity accessible to the public. Her work bridges science, education, and community engagement, focusing on ecosystem services of rivers and floodplains, stakeholder involvement, participatory processes, and creative outreach tools such as a children's book, exhibitions and educational programs. She co-leads the Danube Nature Guides project, promoting intergenerational learning and emotional connections to the river, and is currently active in two EU Horizon projects—Restore4Life and Danube4all—also developing innovative educational packages and tools for wetland conservation. Her interdisciplinary background combines scientific expertise with a passion for communication and awareness-raising in support of sustainable river management.

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