

One Europe, More Nature: A Different Type of Approach

Working towards an ambitious vision

The vision of WWF is a restored Tisza river basin whose floodplains and wetlands are once again re-connected to the main river channels. Only in this way does WWF believe that a properly ecological functioning river system is capable of supporting the range of human, ecological, and economic aspects of life in this region. The [Tisza Vision](#) sheet will explain more about the restoration possibilities and dynamics of the Tisza river.

Drivers in the field

Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is a key driver for landscapes across Europe. What will this mean for the Tisza floodplains and the farmers who work there? OEMN is answering this question by working on the ground at the most fundamental level: local. There is no successful demonstration project without a field component. The [Ecsed Marsh restoration](#) not only shows how to restore low-yield, low-elevation, potential semi-natural floodplain areas but the approach of planning and implementation is also a clear mechanism, which can be adapted to any other similar site in Europe.

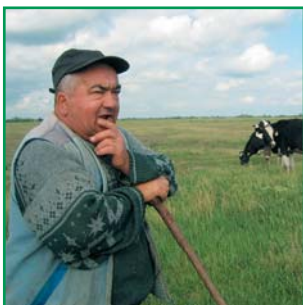
Uncovering and demonstrating practical mechanisms

To fulfill the vision, OEMN identifies and launches win-win partnerships between those groups gaining benefits from using natural resources. The project builds on strong economical bases and promotes elements of an emerging “new economy” good for people and good for the environment. In the preparation phase we screened several business opportunities directly linked to the floodplains. A relatively small-scale example is the local fruit production which has many benefits, not only for the local producers but for nature as well. The [Nagykörű floodplain orchard](#) sheet tells more about how this new economy contributes to the Tisza vision (and also the fight against invasive species).

Large scale opportunities?

Restoration over large-scale areas, thousands of hectares, where nature can conquer the land again, this is the dream of every nature conservationist in Europe and the goal of OEMN. But other large-scale trends are on the horizon, pulling in tens of thousands of hectares – land which is potential wetland and restored floodplain – which are possibly going to turn into energy plantations. Biomass power-plants are becoming key players in the energy sector and it is imperative to find common ground for co-operation, because these changes are happening with or without the involvement of the nature conservation community. The [Biomass](#) sheet introduces how.

Payments for Environmental Services (or just PES) – in the developing world this term has been well known for more than twenty years. It can be a whole range of schemes, where private investors, municipalities or local bodies are uncovering the functions of the ecosystems and based on common understanding and interest, they are conserving the natural resources through market-based mechanisms. In Europe, apart from a few examples, there are only embryonic projects but the [Danube drinking water](#) sheet gives a good description of one such working pilot co-operation, between WWF and Hungarian drinking water supply companies.





WWF's One Europe, More Nature initiative promotes switches in land-use which are good from an economic as well as ecological point of view: switches which point to new, innovative ways of using natural resources as pillars in a "new economy".

In Hungary, that means OEMN aims to secure livelihoods for local people and reduce the ever more frequent floods, whilst addressing key conservation threats affecting floodplain habitats and species. Issues include the drying out of water bodies and floodplain meadows due to a lack of traditional land use, overly high proportion of arable farming and hybrid poplar plantations, expansion of alien species, land a lack of legal conservation status.

Focused largely in eastern Hungary in the Tisza river basin, OEMN's vision is for an ecologically restored Tisza, re-connected to its floodplains, so that natural solutions can once again be applied to problems related to the drying out of the river basin, the disastrous impact of flood events, the overall prevailing environmental degradation, and the lack of viable sources of income for local populations. OEMN demonstrates sustainable methods of floodplain management and conservation by implementing a series of appropriate measures in partnership with many different types of stakeholders.

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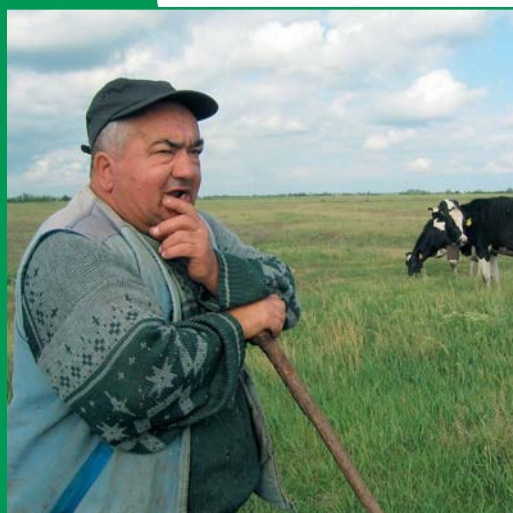
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WWF's One Europe, More Nature initiative is a pan-European project making positive changes to valuable landscapes across the continent. It is funded by WWF Netherlands and is jointly managed by WWF's teams on agriculture, freshwater and forestry.



European Challenges Natural Solutions Changing Landscapes



**One Europe, More Nature
in the Tisza River Basin, Hungary**

What futures for European landscapes?

Are the natural values of Central European countries under threat?

Does EU accession bring even more intensified agriculture or can we work towards restored landscapes maintained by self-sustaining local mechanisms?



Ferenc Márkus
director
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WWF's One Europe, More Nature project focuses on one of Hungary's most critical environmental problems – the increasing degradation of the Tisza lowland riverine ecosystem. Field actions are undertaken on two model sites in Hungary in the Middle-Tisza and the Ecsed Marsh and in the headwaters in Maramures in Romania, in order to stimulate and promote integrated river basin management (IRBM) from the mountains to the lowlands.

This folder will introduce some achievements and lessons learned from the above mentioned regions, together with examples from other parts of Hungary where WWF Hungary is active. Through the following pages, you will get an overview of the activities which WWF is convinced provides the right answers for the questions asked above.

Europe is changing: are we changing too?

The One Europe, More Nature initiative sets out to show that new forms of land-use – innovative approaches based upon new economies which are dependent upon natural resources, but do not degrade them – are not only possible but in many places the only logical strategy for local development which is sustainable. Economy and ecology can go hand in hand, they must go hand in hand, yet so often experience in the field shows us this is not the case.

European challenges; natural solutions; local approaches

This folder and the enclosed factsheets tell a story which is not often heard in the decision-making corridors of power: that natural solutions featuring local people can be solid answers to the European challenges our people and our landscapes currently face. That natural solutions can restore our river basins and provide the social and economic development our society demands. That natural solutions are the right solutions.

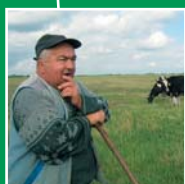




■ The last large meander of the Tisza can be found near Vezensy in the middle basin, with a length of 12 kilometres. Inside the meander the successive former courses of the river are still discernible. Today, unfortunately widespread river regulation and channelization means that the natural dynamics of this great European river are diminishing. (Photo: Viktória Siposs)



■ On the steepest banks of the river Kraszna nest large numbers of kingfishers (*Alcedo atthis*). With their fantastic combination of rainbow colours, are virtually unmistakable when seen well. This photograph was the Hungarian Nature Photograph of the year in 1995. (Photo: Balázs Kármán and László Novák)



■ István Szabó is one of the last remaining farmers in North-Eastern Hungary, who still takes the milking cows from the farms to the grasslands of the Tisza floodplains every day. How his business and those of thousands of small farmers across the country will fare after EU accession is an important social and environmental question. (Photo: Ferenc Kis)



■ Water-violet (*Hottonia palustris*) is a rare and protected plant in some remnant bog-meadows in Eastern Hungary. Drainage during the last 200 years has severely reduced their habitat. (Photo: Balázs Lesku)

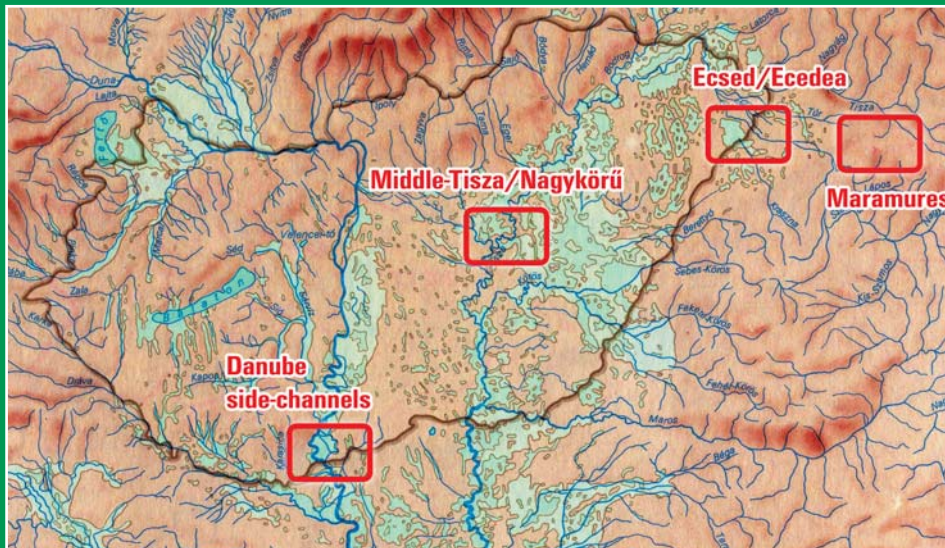
Where do we work?

In Europe



Base-map: NASA World Wind project

In the Tisza River Basin



Base-map: Cartographia, Hungary before the water regulation works in the 19th century

Through its participation in the One Europe, More Nature initiative, WWF Hungary is part of a movement all across the continent which is demonstrating that natural solutions are necessary and that natural solutions work. With project sites in countries such as Hungary, Spain, Romania, Estonia, the Netherlands, Belgium and Greece, together with a policy and communications capacity in Brussels, this movement is providing working examples whose approach – an approach based on innovative partnerships and on policy and market mechanisms – can be replicated all over Europe.