



WORK PLAN 2027

Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative

Prepared for the Steering Group of the Initiative

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1. Purpose and Scope

This Work Plan sets out the priorities, activities, expected results and financial framework of the Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative (Danube WILDisland RRI) for the 2027 calendar year. It is prepared for consideration and approval by the Steering Group and translates the Initiative's strategic objectives into a practical annual programme of work.

The plan is aligned with the Strategic Work Plan 2025-2030, the Communication Strategy and the project “Establishing the Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative” (EURENI). It also reflects complementary activities and projects that directly support the objectives of the Initiative.

2. Planning Context and Funding Principles

2027 is the final implementation year of the EURENI project and therefore a key year for consolidating the operational structure of the Initiative, completing pilot measures, documenting results, preparing practical guidance, maintaining transnational cooperation and strengthening the basis for long-term continuation after the current project period.

For financial planning purposes, confirmed and potential funding sources are kept separate. The 2027 EURENI budget includes BMUV funding and EUR 25,674 from the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) as third-party funding within the same project; the Ramsar contribution is therefore not additional to the EURENI project total. Complementary projects are presented separately to avoid double counting.

A funding concept has been developed with the intention of seeking targeted financial support for the Danube WILDisland RRI, covering operational needs and additional activities. The concept has not been formally submitted for funding, and no financial support has been requested or secured. Suitable national, European and other funding programmes and instruments will continue to be explored. Any related activities remain conditional on securing appropriate funding.

3. 2027 Priorities briefly

Priority	2027 focus
Governance and coordination	Maintain the operational coordination structure, staff, financial management and Steering Group support.

Priority	2027 focus
Transnational cooperation	Organise Steering Group and partner exchanges; maintain links with Ramsar, ICPDR, other RRIs and relevant institutions.
Pilot and conservation actions	Complete RRI-3 project implementation by 31 July 2027, applying the same eligible activity scope as RRI-1, and continue complementary conservation actions, including the approved German preliminary study for Bavarian Danube islands.
Knowledge and practical guidance	Begin preparation of the Best Practices Guidelines after completion of RRI-3 and remaining pilot activities; continue data exchange, technical learning and knowledge transfer.
Communication and awareness	Maintain communication through DANUBEPARKS and LIFE WILDisland channels and support awareness-raising events. If sufficient financial resources are secured, a dedicated website for the Danube WILDisland RRI will be developed; otherwise, dedicated sections for the Initiative will be created within the DANUBEPARKS and LIFE WILDisland project websites.
Funding and sustainability	Develop follow-up funding opportunities and pursue complementary institutional and project-based financing.

4. Work Programme 2027

4.1 Objective 1 - Strengthen governance and operational capacity

The Initiative will maintain its core coordination and administrative capacity throughout 2027. Two full-time positions are foreseen under the EURENI budget: the RRI Coordinator Lower Danube and the DANUBEPARKS officer Middle Danube. Their work will cover day-to-day coordination, partner communication, implementation follow-up, reporting, financial and administrative coordination, preparation of Steering Group documents and support to the Initiative's governance mechanisms.

External accounting and auditing support will be maintained. Annual work planning, budget monitoring and reporting systems will be used to ensure transparent management and timely reporting to the relevant funding and governance bodies. Strengthening the coordination capacity of the DANUBEPARKS office in Austria remains a development objective, subject to securing suitable complementary funding.

4.2 Objective 2 - Enhance transnational cooperation and knowledge exchange

At least one Steering Group meeting will be organised in 2027, together with coordination meetings, partner exchanges, study visits and participation in relevant regional and international processes. Available EURENI resources will support selected experience-exchange activities and travel connected with cooperation across the Danube Region.

The Initiative will continue structured exchanges with partner institutions and other Ramsar Regional Initiatives and will use meetings and field visits to connect practical conservation work, policy dialogue and preparation of future joint projects. Additional workshops and international participation will be implemented where complementary funding is secured.

4.3 Objective 3 - Implement and scale conservation and restoration actions

The subgrant for pilot practical measure - Category RRI-3: “Identification, Preparation, and Implementation of Restoration Actions in the Danube Region” – (call launched in October 2026) with a total budget of EUR 8.500,00, will finance at least one project. RRI-3 follows the same scope of eligible activities as RRI-1, namely feasibility studies, preparation of technical design documents, securing necessary permissions and permits, joint monitoring programmes for relevant species and habitats, engagement of local communities and other relevant stakeholders in planning future restoration projects, and implementation of small-scale pilot actions. The supported project or projects must be fully implemented by 31 July 2027.

A major complementary action beginning in 2027 is the approved German preliminary study “Voruntersuchung Wilde Inseln in der Donau” under the Federal Programme “Blaues Band Deutschland” (Auenförderprogramm)”. The project application explicitly states that the proposed main project is developed by DANUBEPARKS under the umbrella of the Danube WILDisland RRI. The study focuses on the Danube section between Kachlet and Jochenstein, with detailed work on the Passau and Vilshofen Danube islands, and is planned from Q2 2027 to Q1 2029.

During 2027, the German project foresees project coordination and stakeholder liaison, collection and preparation of planning and technical data, field visits and supplementary surveys, analysis of existing modelling bases, selection of the hydraulic modelling approach, and the start of model construction and calibration. DANUBEPARKS is the formal project holder and provides the coordination function, while the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Aueninstitut Neuburg-Ingolstadt) provides the modelling function.

4.4 Objective 4 - Improve knowledge base, monitoring and data sharing

Following completion of the RRI-1 and RRI-3 projects pilot activities by 31 July 2027, preparation of the Guidelines for Best Practices will begin. The Guidelines will be based on the experience and results of the funded pilot measures so that the practical lessons from implementation can be incorporated into the final document. The EURENI budget provides for external services for design, translation and printing.

The Initiative will continue to maintain and use its internal data-exchange arrangements and will integrate relevant technical results from pilot measures and complementary projects. The German preliminary study will contribute new data and technical evidence related to hydraulic modelling, sediment dynamics, river-island restoration feasibility and the interaction between ecological restoration and navigation requirements. Additional innovative monitoring technologies will be pursued subject to the availability of corresponding project funding.

4.5 Objective 5 - increased awareness, stakeholder engagement and communication

Communication will continue through the established DANUBEPARKS and LIFE WILDisland communication channels, including websites, social media and newsletters. If sufficient financial resources are secured, a dedicated website for the Danube WILDisland RRI will be developed. If this is not financially feasible, dedicated sections for the Initiative will be created within the DANUBEPARKS and LIFE WILDisland project websites. The EURENI budget also provides support for RRI-2 awareness-raising events in 2027, with ten event-support units foreseen in the approved budget.

Communication will focus on practical results, funded pilot measures, the role of the Initiative as a transnational cooperation platform and opportunities for partners to participate in future activities. Additional communication materials and wider campaigns will be pursued subject to the availability of suitable complementary funding.

4.6 Objective 6 - Strengthen policy integration, funding and long-term sustainability

2027 will place particular emphasis on continuity beyond the current EURENI project period. The Initiative will maintain dialogue with donors and institutional partners, identify suitable national and European funding mechanisms, develop follow-up project concepts and strengthen partnerships capable of supporting the post-2027 and post-2028 operational phases.

A funding concept has already been prepared to support the operational capacity of the Danube WILDisland RRI coordination and additional activities. A priority for 2027 will be to identify suitable funding programmes or instruments through which this concept could be submitted, while continuing to develop other project-based opportunities in line with the Strategic Work Plan and the conservation priorities of the Initiative.

5. Key Activities, Outputs and Indicators for 2027

Action area	Main activities	Expected output	Means of verification	Funding
Governance coordination	Maintain two full-time staff positions; financial management and audit;	Operational coordination throughout 2027; annual reporting and governance documents	Staff contracts; reports; financial records;	EURENI / Ramsar
Steering Group & networking	Hold Steering Group meeting; experience exchange and study visits; partner and RRI networking	At least one Steering Group meeting; documented exchanges and participation	Minutes; participant lists; travel reports; meeting records	EURENI; complementary funding where available
Pilot measures	Implement the RRI-3 open call (Category RRI-3: "Identification, Preparation, and Implementation of Restoration Actions in the Danube Region"), launched in October 2026 with a EUR 8,500.00 call budget. RRI-3 uses the same eligible activity scope as RRI-1: feasibility studies; technical design documentation; permissions and permits; joint monitoring programmes for relevant species and habitats; stakeholder engagement in planning future restoration projects; and small-scale pilot actions. Finance at least one project and complete implementation by 31 July 2027.	At least one RRI-3 project completed by 31 July 2027; pilot results documented and available for transfer and replication.	Subgrant reports; technical outputs; photos; financial reports	EURENI
Best Practices Guidelines	Start preparation of the Guidelines for Best Practices after completion of RRI-3 and remaining pilot activities; design, translate and print the final publication.	Guidelines prepared using the results and practical experience of the funded pilot measures and disseminated to partners and stakeholders.	Final publication and dissemination records	EURENI / Living Danube Award
German preliminary study	Start Q2 2027; coordination, field/data work and initial hydraulic modelling	Technical and planning basis established for later implementation phase	Project records; survey/data outputs; modelling documentation	Federal Programme "Blaues Band Deutschland"
Communication & awareness	RRI-2 event support; digital communication and newsletters; develop a dedicated RRI website if financing is secured, otherwise create dedicated RRI	Regular visibility and awareness activities across partner platforms	Event reports; publications; website/social-media records	EURENI; additional actions subject to complementary funding

Action area	Main activities	Expected output	Means of verification	Funding
	sections within the DANUBEPARKS and LIFE WILDisland project websites.			
Funding & sustainability	Identify suitable funding programmes and instruments; further develop prepared funding concepts; donor and partner engagement	Funding opportunities identified; concepts and applications developed where appropriate; partnerships strengthened	Concept notes; funding opportunity assessments; applications where applicable; meeting records	Existing resources for preparatory work; complementary funding subject to availability

6. Complementary Approved Project in Germany - Relationship to the RRI

The archived application package for “Voruntersuchung Wilde Inseln in der Donau” identifies DANUBEPARKS as the applicant and intended project holder. It also states explicitly that the proposed main project is being developed by DANUBEPARKS under the umbrella of the Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative. The RRI is described there as a ten-country, river-oriented platform whose objectives include maintaining and restoring the Danube as an ecological corridor and restoring natural processes as a basis for biodiversity and habitat resilience.

Elsewhere in the application, the project is linked to the broader WILDisland concept, the Danube Wild Island Habitat Corridor and the LIFE WILDisland project. The formal project-management and coordination responsibilities are assigned to DANUBEPARKS, with the Aueninstitut Neuburg-Ingolstadt acting as cooperation partner for hydraulic modelling. The application does not state that the formal project deliverables are owned by, submitted to or contractually reported to the RRI. For the purposes of this Work Plan, the project is therefore presented as a complementary approved project developed under the RRI umbrella, while its budget is kept separate from the core RRI/EURENI budget.

Note: the archive reviewed for this plan contains the application and financial-plan documents, not the formal approval decision. The approved status is included here based on the information provided by the RRI Coordinator.

7. Monitoring, Reporting and Governance

Implementation of the Work Plan will be monitored by the RRI Coordination Unit and reported to the Steering Group. Progress will also be reflected in the reporting required under the EURENI project and by the Convention on Wetlands. Financial monitoring will distinguish the core EURENI/Ramsar budget from complementary project budgets and from potential funding that has not yet been approved.

Material changes affecting planned activities, financing or timing will be brought to the Steering Group where required. Activities dependent on unapproved funding will not be treated as financially secured until a formal funding decision is available.

8. Financial Plan for 2027

8.1 Core 2027 budget - Establishing the Danube WILDisland RRI (EURENI)

The approved EURENI project budget allocates EUR 87,106.00 to 2027 activities. This amount includes EUR 25,674.00 from the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) as third-party funding within the project and EUR 61,606.00 from BMUV. The Ramsar contribution is included in, and must not be added on top of, the total below.

Budget category	2027 planned expenditure	EUR
Personnel	RRI Coordinator Lower Danube - EUR 30,396; DANUBEPARKS officer Middle Danube - EUR 31,210	61,606.00
External services	Guidelines for Best Practices - EUR 7,000; Accounting and auditing 2027 - EUR 5,000; RRI-2 awareness-raising events - EUR 2,000	14,000.00
Travel	Experience-exchange study visits - EUR 2,000	2,000.00
Subgrants to implementing partners	RRI-3 practical pilot measures - original 2027 EURENI annual allocation; supplemented by carried-over unspent subgrant resources to reach the EUR 8,500 call envelope	8,500.00
Indirect expenditure	Administrative overhead / indirect costs	1,000.00
TOTAL		87,106.00

Funding source	2027 amount (EUR)	Status / note
BMUV grant	61,606.00	Confirmed within EURENI project budget
Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention)	25,674.00	Third-party funding included within the EURENI project budget
TOTAL	87,106.00	

8.2 Complementary approved project - “Voruntersuchung Wilde Inseln in der Donau”

The German preliminary study is financially separate from the EURENI project. The application budget provides EUR 230,428.89 for 2027, corresponding to the first implementation period from Q2 2027. No third-party financing is foreseen in the application; the costs are presented as federal funding under the Auenförderprogramm of the Federal Programme “Blaues Band Deutschland”.

Partner	2027 budget scope	EUR
DANUBEPARKS	Coordination, personnel, office/administrative costs, travel and equipment	93,826.05
Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt / Aueninstitut Neuburg-Ingolstadt	Modelling staff, field/data work, travel and technical equipment	136,602.84
TOTAL		230,428.89

8.3 Prepared funding concept and potential funding mechanisms

A funding concept has been prepared to support the operational capacity of the DANUBEPARKS office and complementary activities. The concept has not yet been submitted for funding, and an appropriate funding programme or mechanism is still to be identified. The indicative amount below represents the estimated cost of the concept, rather than funding expected or committed from any particular institution. It is not included in the confirmed 2027 budget.

Concept	Scope	Estimated concept budget	Status
Danube WILDisland RRI coordination and complementary activities	Operational capacity and additional activities	EUR 374,000 for 2027-2029 (2028-2030)	Concept prepared but not submitted. No funding secured. Submission subject to identification of a suitable funding programme or instrument.

8.4 Confirmed 2027 financial envelope presented in this Work Plan

The table below summarises the two confirmed funding streams reflected in this Work Plan. The figures are kept separate because they correspond to different projects, contractual structures and budget holders.

Funding stream	2027 value (EUR)	Note
EURENI project - core RRI implementation	87,106.00	Includes EUR 30,000 Ramsar support within the project
Approved German preliminary study	230,428.89	Includes DANUBEPARKS and Aueninstitut budgets; separate project
Combined value of confirmed 2027 activities	317,534.89	Not a single operating budget; shown only as a consolidated value of confirmed activities

9. Steering Group Consideration

The Steering Group is invited to consider and approve the Work Plan 2027, including the distinction between secured activities and activities that remain conditional on additional funding. The financial plan will be updated where necessary following formal funding decisions or approved budget amendments.

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