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Study Trip Netherlands

As the saying goes “**God created the earth but the Dutch created The Netherlands**”.

Located at the delta of the Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt basins and the North Sea, The Netherlands have a strong tradition of flood protection and active water management. A majority of Holland – including some of the most densely populated areas of Europe – are even located up to 6.76 metres below the sea water level. Without a solid system of water management and flood protection, a large part of the Netherlands would simply cease to exist. Against this background, a large integrated water management programme called “Room for the River” was set up by the Dutch government in 2006, in cooperation with the Dutch provinces, municipalities and the regional water boards. This programme is making “room for the river” to restore river landscapes in such a way that they can function as a natural retention space in cases of floods. The Netherlands and its Room for the River Programme were therefore the **ideal destination for a study trip on innovative approaches in water management by the Danube STREAM partnership**.

One of the activities of Danube STREAM is to **develop and disseminate good practices on environmentally sustainable waterway management**. A report with such good practices from all Danube countries will be drafted in the course of 2018. On a national level, meetings have already taken place between the Danube STREAM partners (waterway administrations) and partners from the DANUBE parks-CONNECTED project (protected area administrations) in autumn 2017. These meetings had the aim to identify good practices in the respective Danube countries. These good practices deal with projects that could contribute to both good navigation status and a good ecological status. Examples include the removal of armoured river banks at sites that do not impair navigation conditions, or the adaptation of groynes for both navigation and ecological reasons. The aim of the study trip in the Netherlands was to identify state-of-the-art practices in the field of integrated waterway management beyond the Danube area.



The waterway IJssel at Deventer



Combining spatial quality with waterway management

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15 project partners participated in the two-day study trip to learn more from the Dutch approach in integrated water management. Two sites along the IJssel river – in Deventer and Kampen – were visited. The project partners thereby received first-hand information of the responsible project managers and experts of the national governmental body Rijkswaterstaat and the Province of Overijssel. They enthusiastically shared their experiences made in the implementation of their projects.

Given that both sites combined flood protection measures with nature protection and spatial development in densely populated urban areas, **the process of stakeholder engagement was of particular interest**. The common denominator of the projects was that stakeholders were not solely informed and consulted, but actually involved in the design and elaboration of the projects right from the beginning.



All projects were conceived as bottom-up processes. The process strategy was based on cooperation and co-creation. **Stakeholders thereby changed into shareholders**: projects were adapted and changed according to the ideas and suggestions of the involved parties. The study trip was rounded off by a visit to the museum Batavialand in Lelystad, which explained the complete history of water management in the Netherlands.



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The **key results of the study trip**, as well as the results of further intersectoral conferences organised between the projects Danube STREAM, DANUBEparksCONNECTED and Danube Sediment will be summarised in the good practice report on environmentally sustainable waterway management, to be presented in **Vienna on 13 September 2018** in the framework of the **Danube Awareness Day**. This event will be organised by the Danube STREAM consortium in coordination with the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU and the ICPDR.

