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# RIVER UNIVERSITY

REHABILITATION OF  
THE OLD DNIESTER

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# The Republic of Moldova

## 🌿 Nature

- Moldova has forests, fertile plains, rivers and wetlands, including the Dniester and Prut river ecosystems.
- Around 12% of the country is forested, while agriculture occupies most of the land.
- Moldova is rich in biodiversity, but faces droughts, soil erosion, water pollution, deforestation and biodiversity loss.
- Climate change is increasing the risks of heatwaves, drought and floods.

## 💰 Economy

- Moldova's economy is strongly connected to agriculture, especially grapes, wine, fruits, vegetables and cereals.
- Wine production is an important part of the country's economy and international identity.
- Other important sectors include manufacturing, food processing, IT and services.
- Environmental problems can directly affect the economy through lower agricultural yields, water shortages and damage from extreme weather.



EDITION 2026



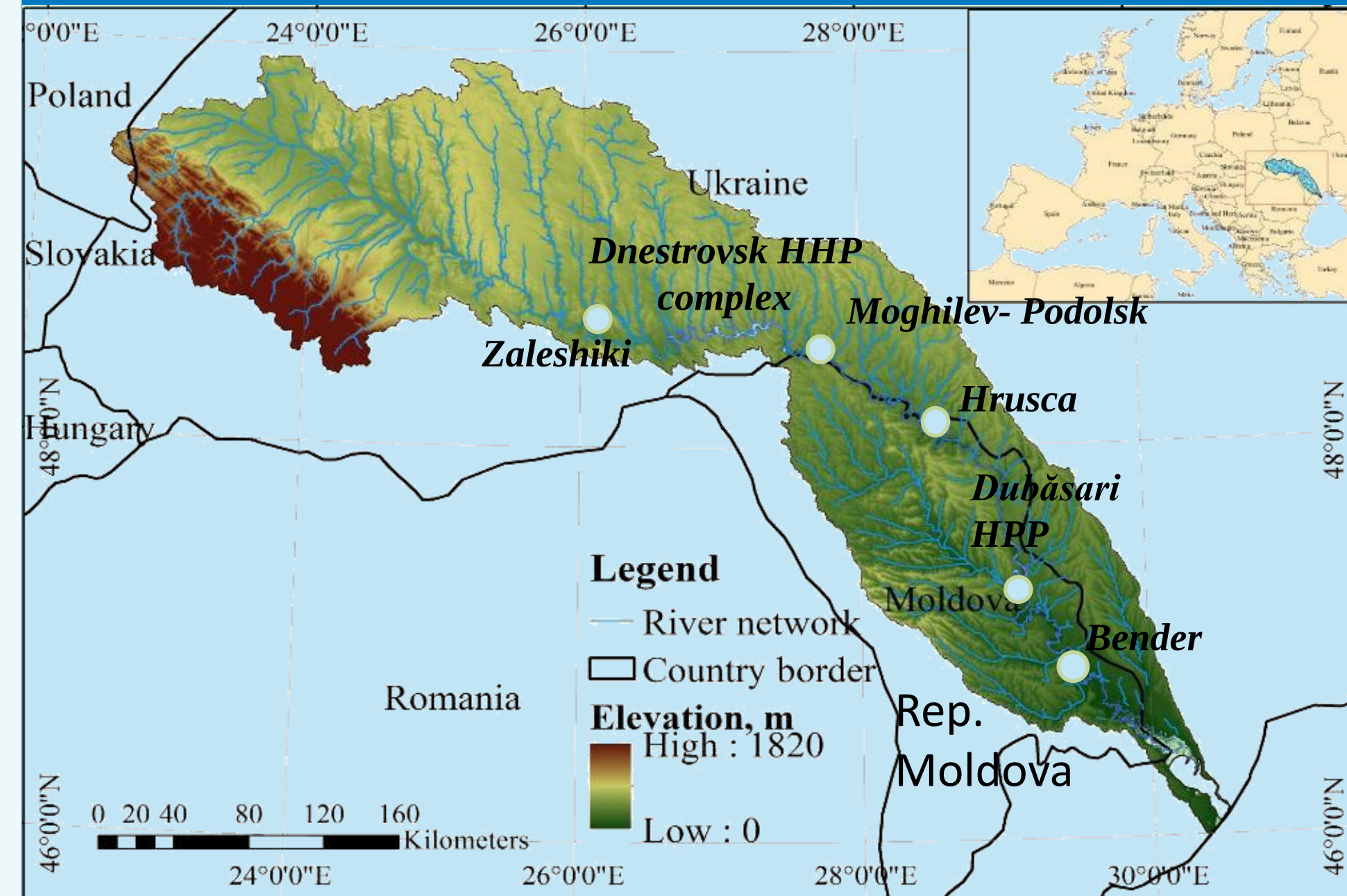
# The Dniester river basin

The Republic of Moldova and Ukraine share the banks of one of the most important rivers of the Europe – the Dniester River. The river is the fourth largest river in Ukraine and the largest river in Moldova.

The Dniester River basin is a region of high ecological, social and economic values, providing drinking and agricultural water, fisheries, biodiversity, and many other services.

the Dniester basin is facing many challenges: from pollution, hydrological changes, hydromorphological alterations, to climate change, and habitat degradation.

Nature based solutions (NBS), focusing on ecosystems state improvements represent a promising route to address many of these pressures in an integrated way.



# The Old Dniester

- The Nistru Chior or Blind/Old Dniester is situated in the lower part of the Dniester basin between the villages of Copanca, Talmaza and Leuntea in the Căușeni and Ștefan Vodă districts.
- It was formed in the 19th century as a result of a strong earthquake that separated the actual main course and the old course, transforming it into an oxbow.
- The Old Dniester has a length of 42 km, surface - 1,8 km<sup>2</sup>, estimated volume – de 2,37 mil. m<sup>3</sup>.
- Water supply sources: precipitation, local streams, springs, Dniester floods.
- Its configuration looks like a horseshoe, and several meanders create a wonderful local landscape as a significant natural monument.
- The Old Dniester is a part of Lower Dniester National Park.

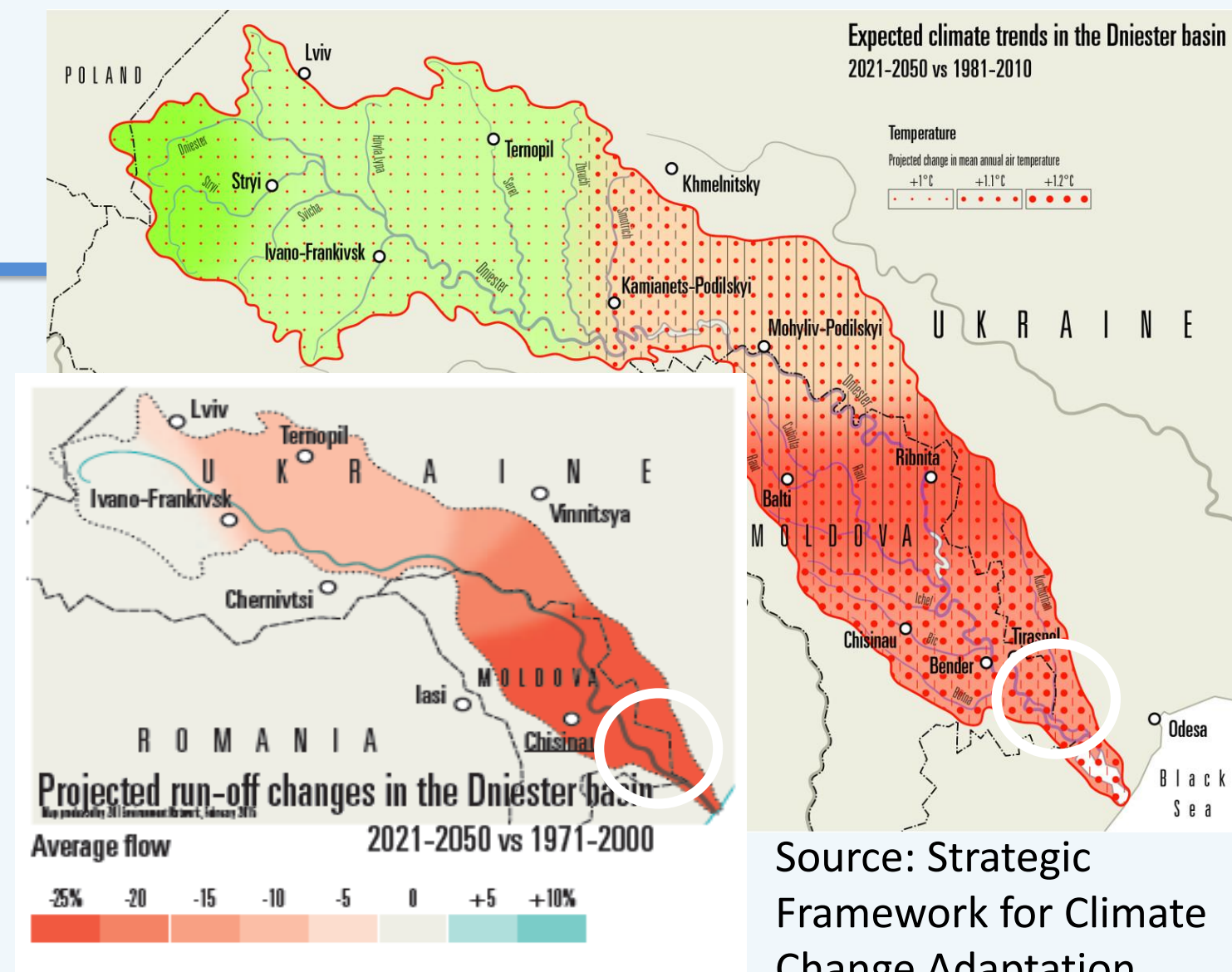


# The challenge

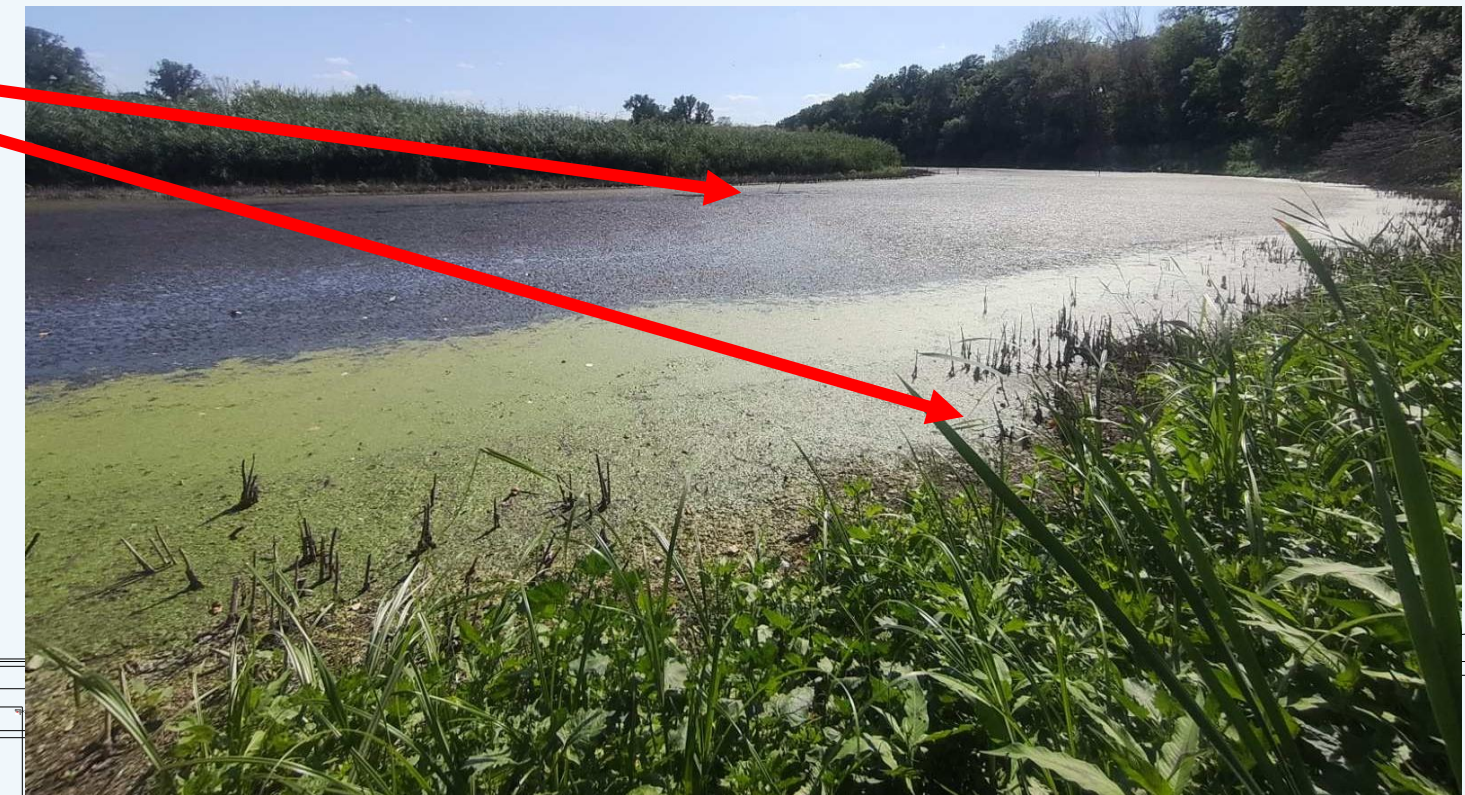
The decline of fauna, flora, water supply and general ecological health was caused by high human pressure as well as climate change over last decades.

The lost connection to the main river, coupled with the limited local water sources such as tributaries and groundwater, has led to a gradual loss of water, with many sectors drying out.

Only during Dniester floods do inflowing waters regenerate the water reserves, leading to the development and rehabilitation of ecosystems and the local economy.



## Dry Old Dniester

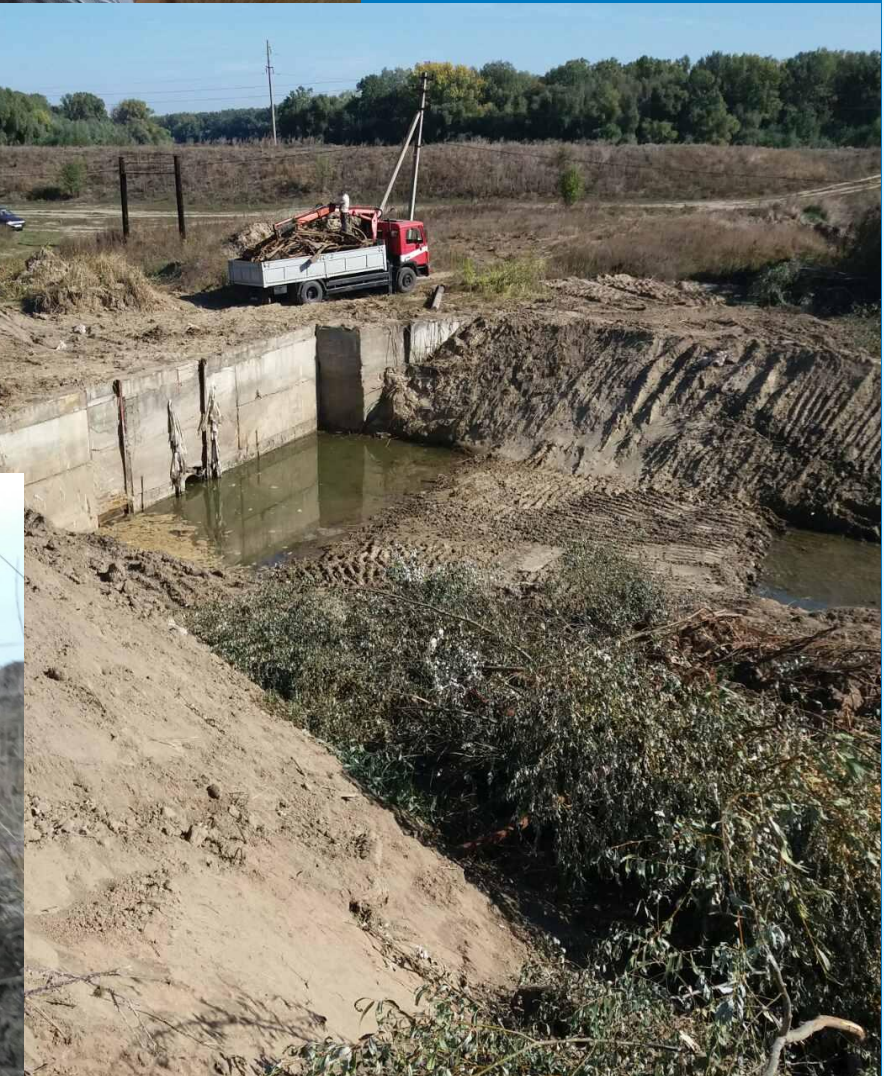


# Achievements

During 2018-2019, the Ecological Society "Biotica" carried out the project "Contribution to the rehabilitation of the wetland: pilot project for the Old Dniester", which was part of the project "Strengthening the institutional framework in the field of water resources in the Republic of Moldova", financially supported by the Austrian Development Agency and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The project achievements are:

- Important sectors of the Old Dniester were cleaned and rehabilitated
- Gates were installed in order to improve the hydrological connection between the old riverbed and the current one of Dniester river
- A number of seminars to raise awareness among the local population about the importance of environmental protection were conducted

<http://margineanugabriel.blogspot.com/2018/07/apеле-moldovei-ada-biotica.html>



# Achievements

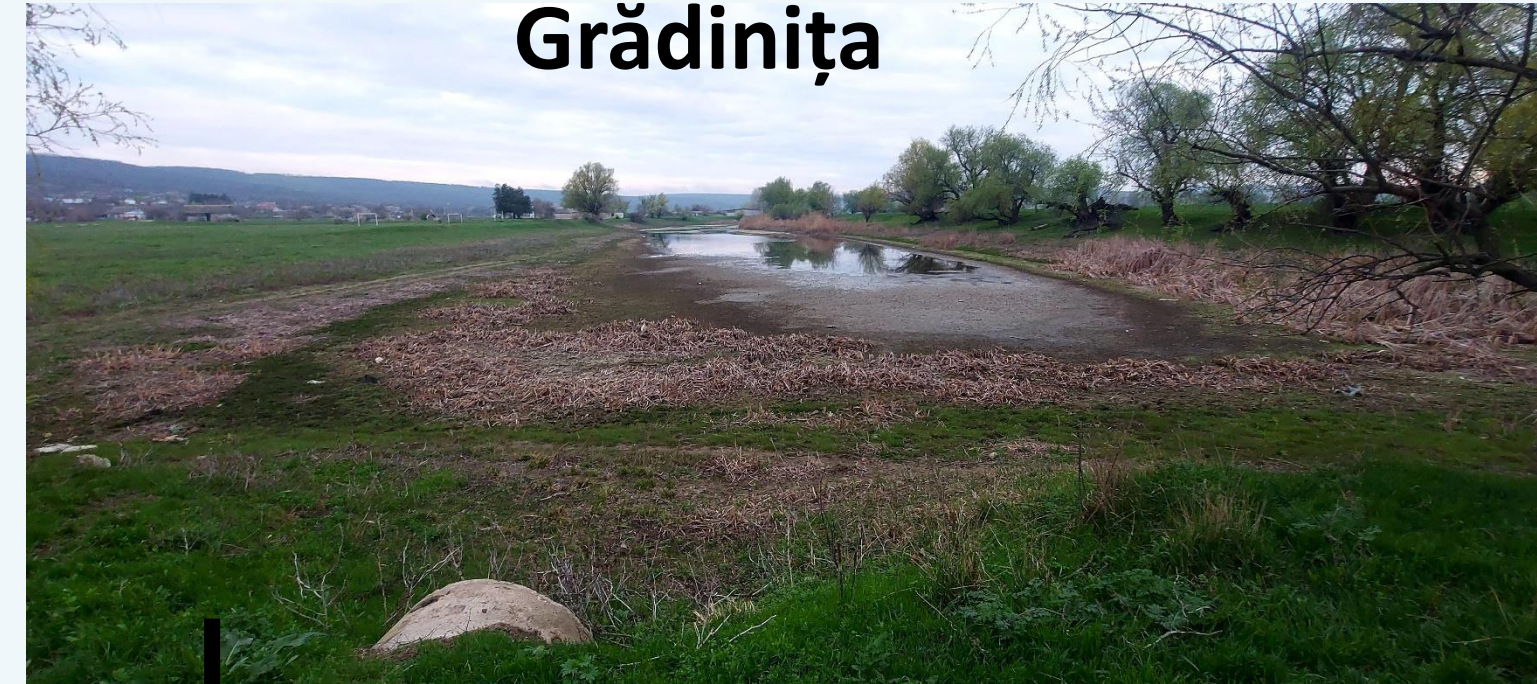
- Evaluation of ecosystems services was performed
- pedestrian tourist routes were identified and arranged
- Afforestation of certain zones and riparian buffers planting were performed

As a result, the region's water and biological resources were enriched, its biodiversity increased, and a new tourist and recreation area was created, as well as an area for the development of important fish species.



<http://margineanugabriel.blogspot.com/2018/07/apel-moldovei-ada-biotica.html>

**Grădinița**



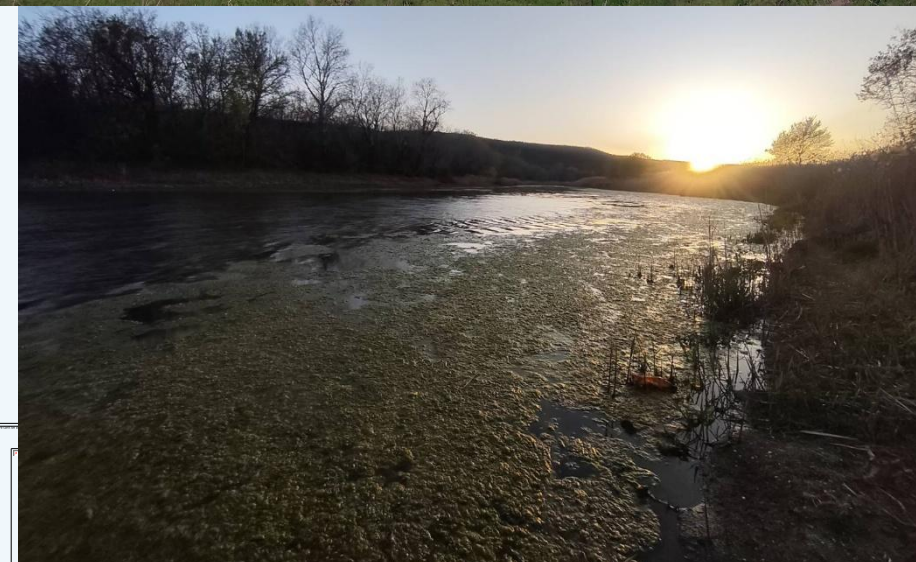
# Achievements

## Gates at the downstream part



2026

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# Feasibility Study and Concept Design Package for the Ecological Rehabilitation of the Lower Dniester Oxbow

Main aim - to identify and evaluate technically, economically, socially, and environmentally viable restoration options for selected oxbow sections in the four target communities: Copanca, Talmaza, Grădinița, and Cremenciug.

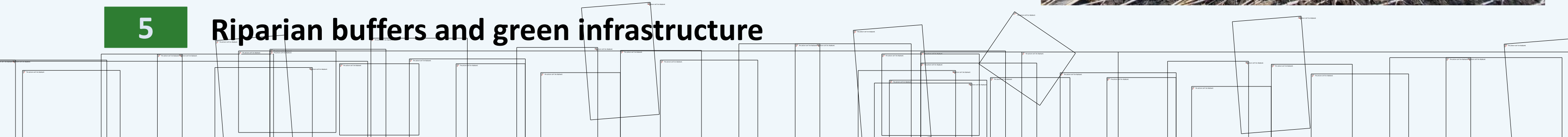
Financed by the project “Support to the Moldovan Authorities for the Sustainable Management of the Dniester River – Phase II” (implemented by UNDP with the financial support from Sweden



**Principle: hydraulic reconnection + adaptive management + ecological restoration**

**~5,29 mil. EUR**

- 1** Sluice / controlled reconnection with the Dniester
- 2** Copanca and Talmaza pumping stations;
- 3** Selective unclogging of the riverbed in priority sectors
- 4** Removing barriers and adapting crossings
- 5** Riparian buffers and green infrastructure



# Lessons learned and recommendations

Despite the large number of measures implemented in the Old Dniester area, there are still many challenges that must be overcome. Although it is now part of a national park, the area was historically unprotected, which allowed it to degrade.

The installed gates only allow flood water to flow in from the main riverbed. Thus, during periods of low flow, the connection between the Old Dniester and the main river is limited and the risk of the oxbow drying out increases.

Also, despite the law establishing the Lower Dniester National Park, no administrative structures have yet been defined, meaning the park lacks real management activities and all the subsequent consequences that entails.

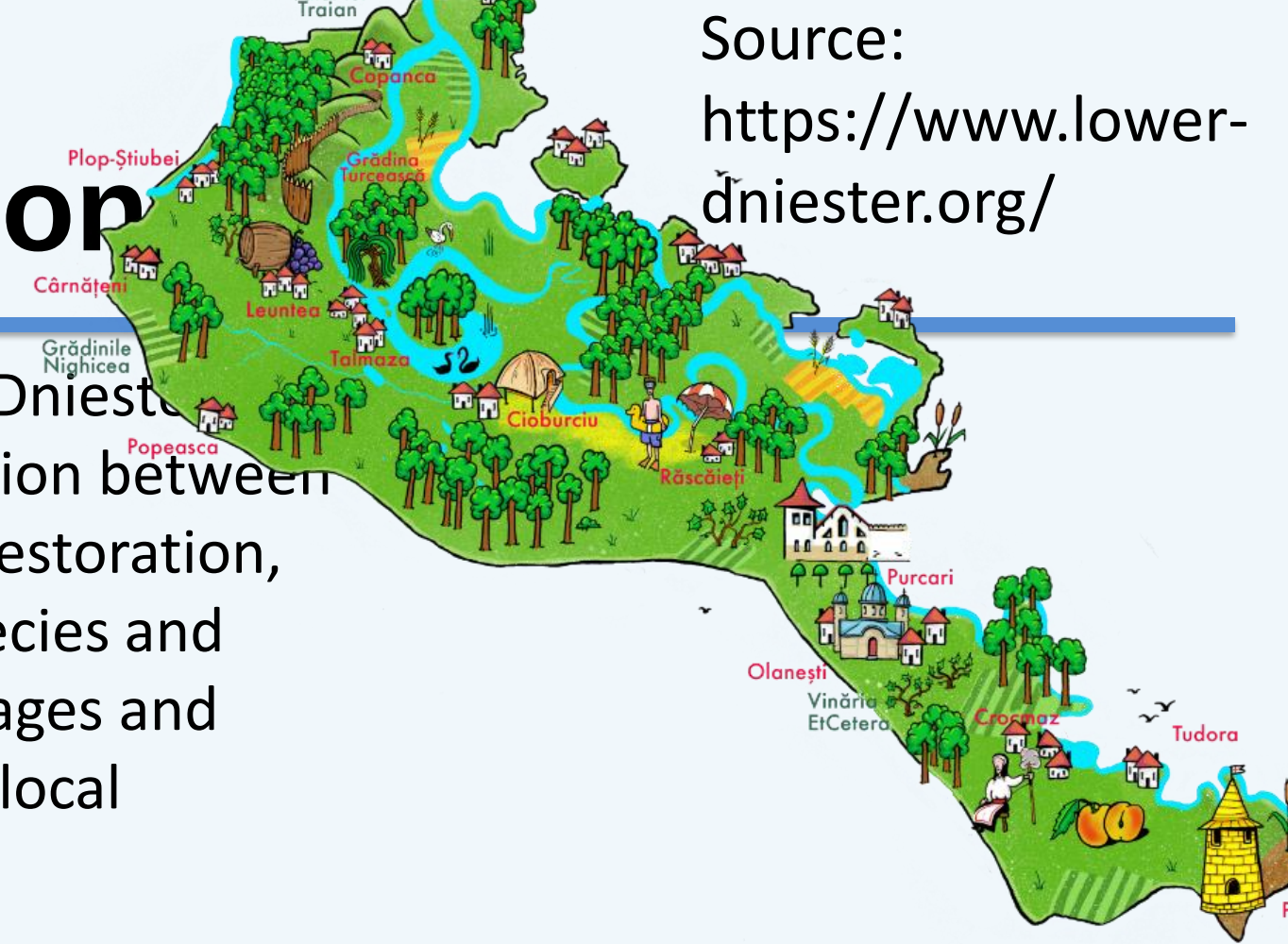
**Grădinița / Leuntea**



# Lessons learned and recommendation

Source:  
<https://www.lower-dniester.org/>

Further actions that must be implemented to finalise the rehabilitation of the Old Dniester should focus on total hydrological restoration, ensuring a guaranteed flow connection between the main and old Dniester riverbeds (especially during low flows), and ecosystem restoration, including afforestation and replanting with native species, protecting Red Book species and improving the morphological state of the Old Dniester riverbed by removing blockages and dredging where necessary, ensuring an appropriate water depth and involving the local community as partners in protecting the restored zones.



## Biodiversity

restored aquatic, marsh  
and riparian habitats

## Water and climate

retention, quality,  
adaptation to drought  
and floods

## Community

water resources,  
compatible irrigation,  
vulnerability reduction

## Ecotourism

landscape value,  
ecological education,  
local development

The community can also benefit from ecosystem services such as ecotourism, sustainable fishing and cultural activities. Education and awareness campaigns should be implemented to raise awareness and increase ecological interest among local populations and schools. A Lower Dniester National Park administration should be installed and long-term funding secured to ensure restoration maintenance.

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Clean Baltic



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# THANK YOU

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