

Audit of Implementation of the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River

From April to June 2013, the Accounting Chamber of Ukraine conducted audit of implementation of the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River.

Audited entities: the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine, the State Water Resources Agency of Ukraine, the State Environmental Inspectorate of Ukraine, the State Ecological Inspectorate in Zakarpattya and Odesa regions, the Department of Environmental Protection in Zakarpattya and Odesa regions, the Dniester-Prut, Danube and Tisza Basin Departments of Water Resources, Ivano-Frankivsk and Odesa Regional Departments of Water Resources, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the Danube Biosphere Reserve.

Key findings:

Implementation of the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River in Ukraine, based on its purpose, has important ecological as well as socio-economic importance for the development of the respective areas and the state as a whole. At the same time, the cooperation in the framework of the International Commission for Protection of the Danube River is important for Ukraine on a number of issues:

- international - International Commission for Protection of the Danube River is one of the most influential environmental agencies in Europe, participation in which is part of the European integration of Ukraine;
- environmental - to improve the ecological state of water bodies of the Ukrainian part of the basins of Tisza, Prut and Danube rivers;
- research and educational - the opportunity to capture the best of European experience in water management, participation in conferences, training, etc.;
- financial - the possibility of international technical assistance to Ukraine.

Responsible executive authorities ensured representation in the International Commission for Protection of the Danube River and its expert groups, that is certified by the presence of international projects and the ability to defend the interests of the state. However, there was no comprehensive interagency representation, which did not encourage the maximum use of available opportunities for such cooperation, which was actually reduced to a regional.

The total amount of funds additionally attracted in the framework of international projects for the construction, maintenance and development of hydrotechnical structures and monitoring systems for 2010-2012, amounted to over 4 million Euro.

However, inadequate financing from the State Budget for the maintenance of water complex, including facilities built at the expense of international assistance, along with the lack of environmental activities in the Danube River Basin aimed at improving water quality, reduce the impact of international projects and create respective operational risks.

The relevant authorities of Ukraine implement the provisions and objectives of the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River within the legal framework. In particular, the bilateral agreements on cross-border cooperation on transboundary waters were concluded, the basic regulations in the sphere of return water control and monitor the ecological state of water bodies were approved. The scope of regulation of the Convention was reflected in the state targeted programs approved by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

At the same time, due to incomplete introduction of the principle of basin water management, implementation of such provisions of the Convention on the integrated basin management of the Danube, Prut, Siret and Tisza Rivers, as well as development of appropriate plans, their approval and implementation, are delayed.

In this case, the audit revealed management shortcomings in terms of ensuring coordination of the executive authorities in the implementation of the Convention and representation in the work of the International Commission for Protection of the Danube River, which are not conducive to the implementation of the Convention.

According to the Government's decision, the Ministry of Environment of Ukraine was assigned the main agency in charge of ensuring the participation of Ukraine in the work of the International Commission for Protection of the Danube River and the main body responsible for the formation and implementation of the national environmental policy. In 2010 and 2012 it didn't make any annual plans and any specific arrangements for the implementation of the Convention.

Keeping water complex in the Danube River Basin and monitoring of surface water, water inventory and certification are not provided by the budget allocations in amounts sufficient for their trouble-free operation and the related activities.

General indicators of water use in the Ukrainian part of the Danube River in 2010-2012 show an increase in the use of fresh water, not the return water, and increasing proportion of discharged waste water.

The waters of the Danube River basin in the transboundary outflow from the territory of Ukraine is moderately contaminated, indicating a need to take more effective measures to improve their ecological condition.