

CABRI-Volga

Cooperation Along a Big River: Institutional coordination among stakeholders for environmental risk management in the Volga basin

The CABRI-Volga project is funded by the European Commission under the International Cooperation (INCO) Programme.

CABRI-Volga is an international coordination action to facilitate cooperation and to coordinate research in environmental risk management in large river basins in the EU, Russia & the New Independent States (NIS).

Geographic Focus on Volga Basin

The project focus is on the Volga basin which comprises 40% of the population of Russia, 45% of the country's industry and 50% of its agriculture.



Figure: Volga River Basin

Various Aspects of Environmental Risk Management Addressed

For the Volga basin, environmental risk management is fundamental for protecting the environment, improving socio-economic conditions and promoting agricultural and industrial economies as well as the health of the Caspian Sea.

Existing problems in governance and institutional performance, deficiencies in civil society involvement as well as low levels of cooperation between academic and policy-making institutions have led to a situation of significant ecologic, social and economic risks in the basin.

International CABRI-Volga Consortium

The CABRI-Volga consortium consists of **18 partners** who are well experienced in their respective fields - half of them coming from

Russia and the other half coming from the EU Member States: Italy, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Malta and the Netherlands.

The **project consortium** represents a wide range of society sectors (public, private and civil) and organisation types, including universities, private research institutes, resource and training centers, city administrations, industry, NGOs, and international organisations dealing with a variety of aspects in environmental risk management:

The CABRI-Volga Consortium

Rupprecht Consult Forschung & Beratung GmbH (Project Coordinator), Cologne, Germany

Environmental Policy Research and Consulting Center "EcoPolicy" (Scientific Coordinator), Moscow, Russia

UNESCO Moscow Office, Russia

Nizhny Novgorod State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering, Russia

Saratov State Socio-Economic University, Russia

Caspian Marine Scientific and Research Centre, Astrakhan, Russia

Autonomous Non-Commercial Organisation (ANO) Institute of Environmental Economics and Nature Resources Accounting "Cadaster", Yaroslavl, Russia

Ecological Projects Consulting Institute, Moscow, Russia

Open Joint-Stock Company "Ammophos", Cherepovets, Russia

Kostroma City Administration, Russia

United Nations University - Institute for Environment and Human Security, Bonn, Germany

Wageningen University, The Netherlands

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki - INWEB, Greece

Centro di Cultura Scientifica "Alessandro Volta", Como, Italy

University of Karlsruhe, Institute for Water Resource Management, Hydrologic and Rural Engineering, Germany

Compagnie Nationale du Rhône, Lyon, France

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, Szentendre, Hungary

International Ocean Institute, Gzira, Malta

High-level Support to CABRI-Volga

The two international organisations among the project consortium, i.e. the United Nations University – Institute for Environment & Human Security (UNU-EHS) in Bonn, Germany, and the UNESCO Moscow Office, are both providing their knowledge, expertise and network capabilities without requesting any funding from the European Commission. As an additional sign of their strong commitment to CABRI-Volga, UNU-EHS is even providing its own **co-funding** to the project.

CABRI-Volga has the **political support of the State Duma** of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. The Representative of the Committee for Ecology confirmed the support of the State Duma to the idea of the project and stressed its topicality with respect to the current initiatives concerning basin management. Furthermore, the Committee will be ready to present the results of CABRI-Volga for discussions in the State Duma and initiate the elaboration of follow-up measures within the Parliament hearings.

Strategic Objectives

CABRI-Volga will be an important project in support of the European Union's international cooperation goals. The strategic objectives of CABRI-Volga are:

- To mobilise existing, isolated human and institutional resources and **increase the research potential on environmental risk management** in large river basins in Russia/NIS and the EU by setting up interdisciplinary, international expert groups, and to link Europe's environmental research more strongly to research programmes at the international level;
- To provide a concrete **contribution to major EU & international policy goals** (e.g. EU Water Initiative, "Environment for Europe" process, the EU's policy towards Russia, the Millennium Development Goals);
- To **strengthen links** between the scientific communities and policy-making processes by establishing a dialogue on mutual demands and practical needs, and by **providing policy guidance and knowledge transfer**;
- To follow an integrative approach for **assessing and remediating human-induced environmental risks** in the Volga basin, emphasising institutional cooperation, for a wide range of themes (including water management, sustainable use of resources, mobility, and cultural and social issues);

- To **develop a long-term perspective for scientific cooperation and experience exchange** on integrated environmental risk management in large river basins and to **develop policy initiatives** and durable cooperation structures for **raising awareness** of stakeholders to equality and democratic principles; thus contributing to the **promotion of environmental and human security in Russia and in Europe** as a whole.

Workplan Foreseeing Three Expert Group Series in Russian Partner Cities

A substantial workplan focused on the achievement of the CABRI-Volga objectives has been defined for the **two-year duration** (December 2004 until November 2006) of the project. At its core are three expert group series organised by the project consortium in different Russian partner cities, i.e. in Astrakhan, Cherepovets, Kostroma, Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Saratov and Yaroslavl.

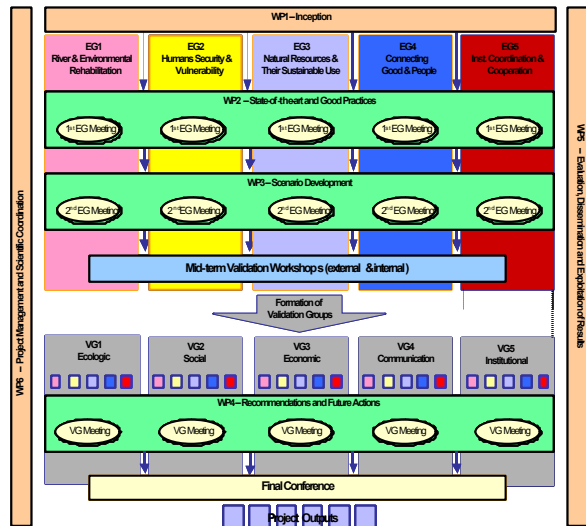


Figure: CABRI-Volga Workplan

Extensive Network of Stakeholder Organisations in Russia/NIS & the EU

Prior to the start of CABRI-Volga, the project Consortium had already established an extensive network of more than 130 organisations in Russia/NIS and the EU. It intends to further expand the network within the duration of the project.

For the expert group meetings, experts from Russia/NIS and EU (~70 per series) from various scientific and institutional backgrounds will be recruited from the network of CABRI-Volga stakeholder organisations to discuss and exchange knowledge and expertise in the CABRI-Volga thematic areas, namely the five expert groups:

**Expert Group 1:
River & Environmental Rehabilitation**

The focus of this expert group is on environmental rehabilitation of large river basins with a special emphasis on improvement of water quality in the Volga river basin.



Figure: Excursion in the Volga Delta

CABRI-Volga explores major problems in water quality management and coordination of policies, tools and activities between multiple stakeholders. Its major foci will be on the following problems that are cross-cutting for sectoral expert groups:

- How to improve coordination of activities of organisations responsible for water quality and what tools can be used for this purpose
- How to effectively incorporate water quality rehabilitation activities into integrated river basin management
- Why are many of the existing strategies and programmes for water quality rehabilitation in large river basins not always effective in practice
- How to build stable and regular partnerships between multiple stakeholders, including water polluters and water users and how to increase their participation in environmental decision-making

**Expert Group 2:
Human Security and Vulnerability**

The focus of this expert group is on enhancing human and environmental security in large river basins with a special emphasis on reducing vulnerabilities to floods, forest fires and technological accidents associated with water quality deterioration (accidents at sewage systems and accidental discharges with resulting water pollution of the river) and potential accidents at barrages and power plants in the Volga river basin. CABRI-Volga explores major problems in management of natural and technological disasters and coordination of policies, tools and activities between multiple stakeholders in prevention, emergency response and rehabilitation of affected populations and livelihoods. Its major foci will be on the following cross-cutting problems:

- How to improve coordination of activities of organisations responsible for management of

natural and technological disasters and what tools can be used for this purpose at each phase of disaster mitigation

- How to effectively incorporate disaster mitigation activities into integrated river basin management
- Why are many of the existing strategies and programmes in disaster mitigation in large river basins not always effective in practice and disasters result in losses of lives, moral and economic damage to population, environment and economic losses
- How to build stable and regular partnerships between multiple stakeholders in enhancing human and environmental security against natural and technological disasters and how to increase local public participation in this process

**Expert Group 3:
Natural Resources & Their Sustainable Use**

The focus of this expert group is on management of natural resources and their sustainable use in large river basins with a special emphasis on sustainable water use, land cover change, and biodiversity conservation (focus on fish stocks) in the Volga basin. CABRI-Volga explores major problems in natural resources management and coordination of policies, tools and activities between multiple stakeholders. Its major foci will be on the following cross-cutting problems:

- How to improve coordination of activities of organisations responsible for sustainable use of natural resources and what tools can be used for this purpose
- How to effectively incorporate sustainable use of natural resources into integrated river basin management
- Why are many of the existing strategies and programmes in sustainable use of natural resources in large river basins not always effective in practice
- How to build stable and regular partnerships between multiple stakeholders in sustainable use of natural resources and how to increase their participation in environmental decision-making

**Expert Group 4:
Connecting Goods and People**

This expert group will focus on the interrelations between large river basins and the transport of goods and people, i.e. on the role of a river as an infrastructure, separating barrier, origin and destination of trips and as an ecological system. These relations reflect the different interests that stakeholders may have in the development of a river basin, deriving partly conflicting claims and

requirements. This concerns the topics and domains (e.g. land-use, infrastructures, economic development, tourism) as well as procedures and instruments (e.g. consultation, creating incentives, regulation). Consequently, also the main stakeholder groups differ. The group will concentrate on the following discussion topics:

- How can water-borne transport become fully integrated into a sustainable intermodal freight transport system
- What are the requirements to establish intermodal public transport networks and services across and along the river
- What are the impacts of increasing leisure mobility and tourism activities in the river basin and how can they be managed in a sustainable manner
- How can the negative impacts of transport on the quality of air, water and soil in the river basin be reduced

**Expert Group 5:
Institutional Coordination & Cooperation**

This special target expert group will concentrate on exploring institutional coordination in integrated environmental risk management and cooperation between multiple stakeholders in large river basins with a special emphasis on the Volga basin. The major foci will be on the following problems:

- How to establish good coordination between institutions responsible for environmental risk management
- What are major successes and failures in implementation and effectiveness of existing institutional frameworks for integrated environmental management in river basins
- How to establish tight interactions between river basin administrations and multiple stakeholders and build regular and stable partnerships among stakeholders

Tangible Project Outputs

In order to improve the quality of environmental risk management in the Volga basin, CABRI envisages producing a number of concrete outputs:

Self-standing project documents based on:

- discussions in the expert groups
- materials and reports provided by participants and project partners
- consensus achieved in expert discussions

Established networks of experts and stakeholders including:

- at the national level networks of interest groups within the Volga basin
- at the international level networks facilitating exchange of experience between Europe and Russia/NIS

Operational tools, such as:

- a website as a knowledge pool and contact database
- newsletters and press statements
- publications containing project materials and results
- policy briefs in Russian and English

Concrete proposals to contribute to the existing initiatives on the development of coordination mechanisms along the basin, such as:

- the establishment of the Volga Basin Council
- the establishment of a State Fund for the Protection of Small Rivers in the Volga Basin
- the establishment of a national committee for the International Human Dimension Programme on Global Environmental Change

Together, these outputs form a complementary set of references, practices and tools that will contribute to the achievement of the project's overall objectives.

Contacts

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