

# Environmental flow, flow regulation and water allocation

Annukka Lipponen, Environmental Affairs Officer  
UNECE Environment Division



Convention of the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes



**UNECE**

# Needs

- the main intersectoral issue that emerged is **flow regulation**, its side-effects, the degree to which it serves different uses and its possible (co-optimization)
- With the EU acquis, the Drina countries face — due to their accession commitments — an anticipated obligation to implement environmental flows. The approaches of the Drina riparian countries differ, and experience is accumulating about environmental flows, in the EU, SEE. The transboundary character of the rivers calls for coordination.
- Need for coordination and harmonization (permitting of withdrawals, regulation etc)
- Energy security, flood risk management, drought response, including transboundary implications
- Priorities clear outlook for investments

# What activities could inform further reflection by the Drina countries?



1. Review of SEE sub-regional practice with environmental flows and good practices
2. Further analysis of the 3 Drina countries e-flow regulation and its implementation
3. Review of how discharge regimes or thresholds has been addressed at transboundary level in relevant agreements

# Possible tasks – can be evaluated in light of planned projects



1. Review of general principles of transboundary water allocations (i.e. environmental sustainability, equitable and reasonable water utilization, causing no significant harm)
2. A targeted review of practice of water resources allocations, focusing on issues relevant to the Drina (coordinated operation of hydropower, ensuring environmental flow, controlling flood damages with flow regulation, maintaining hydraulic infrastructure and managing effects of the sediment load on it, etc.). Within the context of the EU Water Framework Directive, regulation of eflows is a means contributing to achieve Good status in international river basins
3. Identification of key elements from good international practice relevant to the Drina Basin and the wider context of the Sava Basin (environmental flows, water uses and future growth, natural fluctuation in river flow, droughts, high flows, unpredictable effects of climate change, mechanism of re-evaluation and adjustment to fit the new conditions, etc.)
4. Preliminary ideas on a possible formal flow regulation in the Drina basin. Options to be elaborated upon could include e.g. the following:
  - Efficient implementation of the ICPDR Guiding Principles of Sustainable Hydropower
  - Developing exchange of information (at the level of ISRBC, collection of hydrological data has been set up)
  - Harmonization or agreeing on minimum environmental flows

# Possible ways to move forward

- Build on the WBIF Drina project
- Anticipated GEF Drina project work on the minimum flow work. Need to complement?
- Review of transboundary approaches to water allocation and related issues
- The already well developed legal and institutional framework in the form of the FASRB and the Int. Sava River Basin commission allows for continuation of the dialogue about the nexus issues.
- If appropriate, exploring potential good approaches relevant for the Drina countries to evaluate the need for further work and possibly agreement on key flow regulation issues at the transboundary level.