



CONCLUSIONS

The geology and physical conditions are such that highly productive karstic and alluvial aquifers occur widely in the region. The former are located mainly on the Dinaric coast and its mountainous hinterland, the latter in the plains of the lower Danube basin. Both are, by their mode of occurrence, more or less strongly connected to the associated surface water systems, and by their characteristics highly vulnerable to pollution.

The assessment confirms that groundwater is important for all water uses in the region, providing in excess of 50% of total water use in more than half of the 51 assessed groundwaters, and more than 75% in about ten of them.

The ICPDR is an established and important driver of and facilitator for collaboration in water management in the region, and was widely referred to as such. This is seen in the more recent establishment within the Danube basin of specific frameworks for cooperation on the Sava and Tisza. However, there is a clear need for bilateral agreements to facilitate the joint identification, monitoring, data exchange and management of transboundary groundwaters, particularly outside the Danube Basin.

Overall, the quantity and quality status of transboundary groundwaters in SEE is good, with the exception of a small number of potential hot spots identified in this assessment. However, this may reflect a 10- to 15-year period in which human activities causing pressure factors have been suppressed by the regional economic and political situation. However, demographic growth and economic development is beginning an upward trend, and agricultural expansion and intensification and increased tourism in particular are likely to provide increasing pressure factors for both quantity and quality status. Moreover, the impact on water resources in the region of climate change, particularly the effects on rainfall, recharge, floods and droughts and interactions between surfacewaters and groundwaters, remains unpredictable.