



sundanse

Sustainable Sediment solutions for
the Danube - Black Sea system

Press Article



3,500 kilometers, 100 samples and 100 hours of science: The outcomes of the SUNDANSE Danube Expedition aboard REXDAN

In June 2026, a team of European experts working under the EU-funded SUNDANSE project embarked on an international scientific voyage aboard the REXDAN, Europe's most advanced freshwater research vessel.

Navigating a **3,500-kilometre round trip** along the Danube River from Romania to Austria and back, an international team of researchers spent **100 operational hours** conducting intensive, real-time scientific analysis directly on the water. The expedition marked a major step forward in addressing the Danube River-Black Sea system's critical environmental challenges, specifically the disruption of its natural sediment balance. During the mission, scientists successfully collected **100 sediment and water samples** across key demonstration sites and observation points in **Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia**.



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While initial toxicity screening and immediate sample preparations were conducted in the vessel's specialised onboard laboratories during the voyage, post-mission laboratory analyses are currently in progress.

Researchers are analysing the samples for a comprehensive range of environmental parameters, including:

- Microplastics and sediment particle size distribution,
- Heavy metals and chemical pollutants,
- PAHs (Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons) and PCBs (Polychlorinated Biphenyls),
- Pesticides and emerging contaminants, such as tire additives.

Initial findings are currently undergoing rigorous data evaluation to build a high-resolution map of the Danube's environmental health.

Beyond its technical achievements, the voyage served as a platform for regional engagement, **welcoming around 300 diverse stakeholders** aboard during dedicated stops in Novi Sad (Serbia), Budapest (Hungary), Bratislava (Slovakia), and Vienna (Austria). The vessel's doors were opened to public authority representatives, local decision-makers, high school groups, and university students specialising in environmental protection, biology, and medicine. The mission attracted high-level diplomatic and political attention, featuring visits from key leaders driving European river policy.

With the physical voyage complete, the SUNDANSE consortium is shifting focus toward data modeling and regional knowledge sharing. By combining 100 hours of onboard laboratory research with high-level stakeholder dialogue, this mission demonstrated the power of transboundary scientific collaboration. The final outcome will represent a dataset that will directly inform the future management and protection of the Danube River Basin.



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The SUNDANSE mission supports the EU's "Restore our Ocean and Waters" goal, aiming to protect freshwater ecosystems and foster a climate-neutral blue economy by 2030.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The SUNDANSE project is a Horizon Europe initiative involving 19 partners from 10 countries. It focuses on innovative sediment management to ensure a sustainable future for the Danube-Black Sea system.

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