



EISENSTADT DECLARATION ON PARTICIPATION IN THE DANUBE STRATEGY

*unanimously adopted at the 1st Participation Day of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region
25 June 2014 Esterházy Palace, Eisenstadt, Austria*

The European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) has been elaborated to address common challenges and provide comprehensive development in the Danube Region. The EUSDR as an integrated framework attempts to develop improved solutions by a "concrete process on the ground" that is operated by clear strategic visions, concrete concepts and projects. Thus, "by 2020, all citizens of the Region should enjoy better prospects of higher education, employment and prosperity in their own home area. The Strategy should make the Danube Region a truly 21st century region, secure and confident, and one of the most attractive in Europe."¹

In this context, the participants of the 1st Participation Day of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region have discussed opportunities for enhanced participation of local- regional actors and civil society in the EUSDR implementation.

We believe that the commitment of the civil society and local actors are essential for an effective and successful EUSDR. It is essential to support the EUSDR in its strategic visions as well as in its day-to-day implementation.

Participants take note of the following guiding documents of the EUSDR, laying down general principles such as subsidiarity, territorial and social cohesion and the place-based approach that commit the EUSDR to multi-level and multi-actor involvement.

- Article 11 of the TEU and articles 15 and 174 of the TFEU defining the transparent dialogue with and participation of civil society as well as articles 300-304 of the TFEU defining the role of the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee;
- Communication from the European Commission on the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 8 December 2010 and the accompanying Commission staff working document "Action Plan";
- Resolution of the European Parliament 'Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region' of 17 February 2011;
- Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'The Danube Region Strategy' of 31 March 2011;
- Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Communication from the Commission — European Union Strategy for the Danube Region' of 16 June 2011;
- Conclusions on the European Union Strategy of the General Affairs Council Meeting of 13 April 2011;
- Conclusions of the European Council of 23/24 June 2011;
- Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region of 8 April 2013;

¹ COM(2010) 715 final, p. 3



- Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies of 27 June 2013;
- Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Report from the Commission concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies', 16 October 2013;
- Conclusions of the General Affairs Council on added value of macro-regional strategies General Affairs of the Council meeting (14926/13) of 22 October 2013;
- Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the 'Added value of macro-regional strategies' of 28 November 2013;
- Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the governance of macro-regional strategies – of 20 May 2014.

Furthermore, participants attest that stakeholders at all levels have issued declarations and position papers endorsing the structural involvement of civil society into the EUSDR such as:

- the Guiding Principles of Civil Society in the Danube Basin²;
- the Austrian guidelines of participation in its federal politics³;
- the decision of the Council of Ministers of Baden-Württemberg on the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, 26 June 2011,⁴
- the "Bucharest Statement" of the Meeting of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions and the 7th European Conference of the Danube Cities and Regions,⁵
- the Roadmap for the Integration of Civil Society Organisations in the EUSDR structure, by PA 10.⁶

Convinced that civil society and local actors play a crucial role in a successful EU Strategy for the Danube Region,

The participants of the 1st Participation Day of the EUSDR therefore declare the following:

We believe that the EUSDR needs a clearer strategic vision underpinned by political commitment to be reflected in the right choice of projects it supports.

In our vision, the EUSDR as a macro-regional strategy should build and foster democracy, good governance and the well-being of the citizens. It should aim at preserving and sustainably developing the rich natural and cultural capital in the Danube Region.

The EUSDR, a multi-national strategy comprising EU-member states as well as candidate states and non-EU member states must encourage activities in the whole Danube Region aiming to achieve the standards of participation, transparency and subsidiarity as laid down in the European Union's primary law.

² Guiding Principles of Civil Society in the Danube Basin, adopted at the DCSF key-actors meeting, 29 June 2010, Esterházy Palace, Eisenstadt, Austria

³ Standards der Öffentlichkeitsbeteiligung: Praxisleitfaden, Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft (Lebensministerium), Bundeskanzleramt, 2011.

⁴ Ministerratsbeschluss eines Maßnahmenkatalogs zur Umsetzung der EU-Strategie, Stuttgart, 26. Juni 2011.

⁵ "Bucharest Statement" of the Meeting of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions and 7th European Conference of the Danube Cities and Regions Sunday 27 and Monday 28 of October 2013, Bucharest, Romania.

⁶ Integration of civil society organisations in the EUSDR structure, Paper presented by PA10 at the Third PAC-NCP Meeting in Brussels, 30-31 January 2013



Building, fostering and devolving democracy as well as applying the principle of subsidiarity is a joint task and responsibility for state and non-state actors at all levels of the EUSDR: local, regional, national and macro-regional in all participating states and the European Union. The introduction of an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society is a precondition for a modern and strong democratic Danube Region.

These ambitious aims, validated by the principles recognised in the Treaties mentioned above, cannot be reached without innovative and transparent structures, both top-down and bottom-up, supporting the dialogue and consultation of all participating actors, thus enhancing EUSDR visibility and improving the citizen's ownership of the Strategy.

In order to facilitate the full implementation of enhanced participation we call for the implementation of the principles of transparency, subsidiarity and improved governance through the following measures:

- I. Organization of regular hearings by NCPs and PACs at the level of the national platforms of the EUSDR with local communities/municipalities and civil society. The High Level Group meetings shall reflect the positions formulated at these hearings in close cooperation with local-, state- and non-state actors.
- II. Development of a "EUSDR Road Map to Democracy and Participation" involving all actors at local, regional, national and macro-regional level, from all participating states and the EU in the interim period before the 4th Annual Forum in 2015.
- III. Stronger and equitable involvement of civil society stakeholders in the EUSDR Annual Fora, which represent the main platform for an official and public dialogue, incorporating local actors and civil society as an integral part of the EUSDR. This includes preliminary consultation of local actors in the preparatory work for the Annual Fora.
- IV. Financing of electronic information tools and adequate person-power to share information on EU programmes, projects and funding as well as EUSDR activities in a transparent and timely way within the Civil Society Organisations of the EUSDR.
- V. Financing and Establishment of a Civil Society Platform, which shall provide focussed policy recommendations to all levels of the governance system of the EUSDR and thereby it delivers a simple and reliable mechanism of transparent exchange and structured dialogue with the civil society. Moreover, the Civil Society Platform may serve as the main gateway to gear civil society and Non-Governmental Organisations towards the Priority Areas of the EUSDR, National Contact Points and the European Commission and thereby make them familiar with and integrate into the macro-regional approach.
- VI. Systematic allocation of funds especially by the participating states to build up and maintain the above mentioned participatory structures. This also needs comprehensive coordination and continuous discussions between the participating states.
- VII. A future revision process of the EUSDR must be conducted in an open, transparent, and participative way.

We invite all stakeholders of the EUSDR to start the consultation for the "EUSDR Road Map to Democracy and Participation" forthwith.

We invite all participating states and regions to hold their first national/regional hearings in due time before the 4th Annual Forum of the EUSDR in 2015.

Eisenstadt, 25 June 2015