

**EU-Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)  
Austrian thematic contributions ("2<sup>nd</sup> non-paper")**

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## Contents

A.	General remarks.....	1
B	Priority Areas for the future Action Plan of the Danube Region Strategy .....	4
(1)	Priority Area: Danube navigation .....	4
(2)	Priority Area: Upgrading of multimodal nodes as places for sustainable development and promotion of environment-friendly mobility .....	9
(3)	Priority Area: Sustainable energy supply .....	17
(4)	Priority Area: Network of clusters, cooperation of enterprises and research and technology development (RTD) for enhanced competitiveness .....	22
(5)	Priority Area: Fostering agglomeration networks with focus on green technologies for the mitigation of climate change effects .....	26
(6)	Priority Area: Water management and flood prevention .....	30
(7)	Priority Area: Biodiversity and environmental protection .....	35
(8)	Priority Area: Labour Market .....	40
(9)	Priority Area: Cooperation in education and culture for sustainability and competitiveness.....	43
(10)	Priority Area: Culture and sustainable tourism.....	51

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## A. General remarks

During the first half of 2010, the European Commission is gathering inputs from countries concerned and other relevant stakeholders to enrich the elaboration of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). At the meeting with National Contact Points on 19 March 2010, the European Commission invited Danube countries to submit additional contributions before the end of April 2010. These contributions should ideally provide more specific ideas about actions and projects – following the methodology which has been outlined in an explanatory note by DG Regio. Contributions transmitted by National Contact Points will provide an additional source of information for the Commission before drafting the EU-strategy document and the Action Plan - of which a first outline will be presented at the final conference in Constanta on 9-11 June 2010 and which will afterwards be subject to bi- and multilateral consultations with involved Danube countries.

### Status and content of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Austrian contribution

The second Austrian contribution is based on the first non-paper (including the non paper of the Austrian Länder) which was transmitted to the European Commission on 10 December 2009 (and could be regarded still valid) and intends to deepen the Austrian views about some selected policy issues. In this context it has to be highlighted that the first Austrian Contribution followed the European Commission and suggested two other pillars “Welfare and Security” – addressing issues of immediate relevance for the citizens and “Governance” – using the experiences of the national level, the regions, cities and municipalities”. The paper aims both to enrich the Commission’s information base and to establish starting points for bi- and multilateral consultations. In general, Austrian stakeholders remain also open for developing transnational co-operation in other areas of interest to Danube partners.

This second non-paper has been elaborated by and coordinated among Austrian governmental bodies on administrative level (federal, regional and local) as well as social partners and some groups of interest (“*Austrian stakeholders*”). It indicates areas in which Austrian institutions would be willing to play a coordinating role in the future. Nevertheless, the paper has not been subject to governmental decisions and could thus formally neither be regarded as complete picture of Austrian interests nor does it pre-judge future official Austrian positions.

In this context, the following specific thematic contributions have been elaborated by the Austrian stakeholders (see Chapter B):

- (1) Priority Area: Danube navigation
- (2) Priority Area: Upgrading of multimodal nodes as places for sustainable development and promotion of environment-friendly mobility
- (3) Priority Area: Sustainable energy supply

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- (4) Priority Area: Network of clusters, cooperation of enterprises and research and technology development (RTD) for enhanced competitiveness
  - (5) Priority Area: Fostering agglomeration networks with focus on green technologies for the mitigation of climate change effects
  - (6) Priority Area: Water management and flood prevention
  - (7) Priority Area: Biodiversity and environmental protection
  - (8) Priority Area: Labour market
  - (9) Priority Area: Cooperation in education and culture for sustainability and competitiveness
  - (10) Priority Area: Culture and sustainable tourism

In addition, the following international organisations working in the Danube Region together with their supporting documents are regarded particularly relevant for establishing an Action Plan:

- In the framework of the Danube Protection Convention the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) which adopted the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) in December 2009 and the Danube Declaration “Danube Basin: Shared Waters-Joint Responsibilities”, presented and approved at the Ministerial meeting on 16 February 2010 in Vienna providing insight in all water related issues at stake within the Danube in an integrated way.

#### **Preliminary Austrian conclusions concerning the further elaboration of the EU-Strategy for the Danube Region**

Reflecting the debate so far, the following aspects have been discussed among Austrian stakeholders and should be considered in the further work:

- Austrian stakeholders welcome the opening of the EUSDR process to partners of the non-EU countries involving them in the *decision-shaping* process – not questioning that *decision-taking* will finally be up to EU-member countries (and the EC).
- Concerning the overall approach and the level of ambition, Austrian stakeholders fully support the integrated and the “area/river basin” approach. The Commission’s Scoping document of February 2010 has been regarded a first useful orientation paper which has nevertheless to be developed further (it is expected that the Austrian proposals for structuring the EUSDR and for defining the priority areas will be taken into consideration).
- Although wide ownership and broad interest in the EUSDR is regarded a positive signal, aiming for an EUSDR as an effective multi-annual ongoing process, the selection of *Priority areas* will have to follow a selective and not an over-ambitious comprehensive approach. Criteria for

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selectiveness should ideally be applied in compliance with the various strategic aims of the EUSDR-process:

- addressing development issues of transnational importance, urgent activities which have to be pursued by various countries in cooperation
  - focus on pending policy coordination challenges for which the EUSDR could realistically provide a value-added (addressing concrete projects for illustration and/or as stimulating visions for cooperation - avoiding a too narrow focus of the debate on financing concrete projects)
  - responding to real needs and concrete readiness of key actors to utilise the EUSDR-framework for making progress in fostering their integrated approach
  - promoting multi-level governance mechanism – enhancing the involvement of relevant sub-national (cities, regional and local authorities) and non-governmental actors in appropriate ways
  - activities which could provide concrete, visible results in the period 2011-2013
- In respect to the geographical scope of the EUSDR, it is recommended to abstain from defining the “Danube Region” definitely. Geography of cooperation should follow the principle of functional relationships. However, it could make sense to focus during the first phase of the EUSDR on concrete “river and river-related” policy issues in order to build the “identity” of the EUSDR cooperation gradually.

Austrian stakeholders will continue to cooperate actively with the Commission's services and the Danube partners for ensuring a successful elaboration and an effective future implementation of the EU-Strategy for the Danube Region. Several Austrian institutions would even be prepared to play an active role in developing further the above mentioned priority areas towards implementation.

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## **B Priority Areas for the future Action Plan of the Danube Region Strategy**

### **(1) Priority Area: Danube navigation**

#### **Presentation of the issue:**

As a transport route, the Danube has been in use for centuries and can be characterised by its valuable waterway infrastructure. Together with the Rhine, the Danube links the North Sea with the Black Sea over a length of 3,500 km and directly connects eleven countries. From Kelheim in Germany to Sulina in the river's Romanian delta, the navigable length of the Danube totals 2,414 km serving more than 40 ports of international importance. With 10 riparian countries and 1,150 km of shared borders the Danube is also the most international river of the world.

The increased utilisation of inland navigation as an environment-friendly mode of transport which emits 3.5 times less CO<sub>2</sub> per ton-kilometre than trucks is also a clear objective of the common European transport policy. This is documented in the "Integrated European Action Programme for Inland Waterway Transport" (NAIADES), which aims to create favourable conditions for inland navigation services through a comprehensive set of measures. In support of the implementation of NAIADES, the European Commission and the inland navigation sector have created the PLATINA project which brings together all relevant stakeholders in a multidisciplinary knowledge network, to which most of the Danube riparian EU Member States are currently contributing. As an international waterway the Danube is also part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and has been defined as Pan-European Transport Corridor VII.

#### **Main challenges:**

The Danube is not only an important transport route, but it is also the backbone of one of the largest river systems of Europe. From an ecological point of view the Danube can be characterised as an ecosystem of high ecological complexity and value. Therefore infrastructure improvements should be fully in line with the preservation and restoration of the valuable ecosystem of the Danube. This requires a holistic and interdisciplinary planning approach which is set out in the "Joint Statement on the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin".

With the international dimension of the Danube in mind, strong interregional cooperation is essential in order to fully tap the potentials of the Danube as an eco-friendly transport route. Concrete actions have to be taken in order to develop ports along the Danube into multimodal logistics centres, to modernise the Danube fleet, to introduce green logistics services (e.g. container liner

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services, harmonised River Information Services), and to create dedicated education and training facilities in the Danube transport sector.

#### **Danube Region added value:**

The holistic and coordinated improvement of transport conditions on the Danube will create a cost-effective and eco-sustainable transport backbone for the whole Danube Region, thus significantly contributing to sustainable regional development and mobility. At the same time the multidisciplinary approach taken in waterway infrastructure projects will ensure the preservation and the restoration of the valuable ecosystem Danube.

#### **Actions:**

- **Implement the agreed TEN-T priority Danube waterway infrastructure projects (TEN-T Priority Project 18) on time and in an environmentally sustainable way.** Ongoing projects for the elimination of infrastructure bottlenecks exist in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. These projects shall take up and integrate the planning guidelines contained in the “Joint Statement on the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin”. In doing so, the correct implementation of those infrastructure projects will also contribute to the preservation and restoration of the Danube's ecosystem.
- **Coordinate national transport policies in order to promote Danube navigation.** The European action programme NAIADES defined a comprehensive set of measures in order to tap the full potential of inland navigation as an eco-friendly and energy-efficient transport mode. Several Danube countries have recently prepared development strategies and/or are about to launch activities in order to implement the NAIADES programme. On this basis the countries shall elaborate dedicated and harmonised national action plans in promotion of Danube transport. These national action plans shall take into account the international dimension of the Danube and should therefore also contain measures which require international cooperation and coordination. Dedicated national inland navigation development agencies would be a suitable instrument to implement these action plans.
- **Develop Danube ports into multimodal logistics centres.** Efficient and well-equipped ports are a key factor for multimodal transport and are also a major driver for regional economic development and cross-border activities. Some Danube ports like Vienna and Enns, but also Linz and Krems in Austria have already ambitious programmes to improve their function as trimodal terminals for the combined environmentally friendly transport system. But in a holistic approach for the whole Danube Region the port infrastructure and the hinterland connections of many Danube ports should be improved in order to enable efficient transshipment operations, environment – friendly multimodal transport and modern

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logistics services (as e.g. container liner services). The Danube countries shall draw up national port development programmes and secure the financing of the identified priority measures. National port development programmes should also be coordinated and harmonised between neighbouring countries sharing a common Danube border.

- **Improve the environmental performance of Danube navigation.** Inland navigation is principally an environment-friendly mode of transport which causes the least external costs of all land transport modes: It emits 3.5 times less CO<sub>2</sub> per ton-kilometre than trucks, is very safe and has the lowest specific fuel consumption of all transport modes. Nevertheless the environmental performance of Danube navigation can be further improved by means of dedicated fleet modernisation measures and optimised waste management. The Danube countries shall take up existing knowledge on fleet innovation (e.g. EU innovation database of the PLATINA project, Western European funding schemes) and draw up national fleet modernisation funding schemes. Furthermore the Danube countries shall establish a sustainable, environmentally sound and transnationally coordinated approach in ship waste management along the Danube. In this perspective, the efforts already undertaken in the South-East Europe project WANDA (Waste management for inland Navigation on the DANube) shall be taken into account.
- **Improving Ship Waste Management along the Danube River and Ship Fuel Quality Control.** Strongly increased European requirements for ship fuel quality control will be in force from 1 January 2011, combined with the obligation to monitor/enforce them in all countries along the Danube, including ships not based in the EU – Ukrainian, Serbian vessels. In this context, Waste Management and Fuel Quality Ship Control should be focused by projects.
- **Implement harmonised River Information Services on the Danube.** Modern telematics and information services for inland navigation – referred to as River Information Services (RIS) – have been developed in Europe over the last decade on the legal basis of the European RIS guidelines. RIS contribute substantially to increasing the safety and efficiency of inland navigation. Shipping operators, ports and logistics service providers can optimise their logistics operations, thus reducing overall transport costs. The potential of RIS can however only be fully realised if they are implemented along the entire course of the navigable Danube. Therefore the Danube countries shall continue their joint efforts via European project activities (e.g. IRIS Europe 2) to develop and standardize RIS-related services.
- **Invest in jobs and qualifications in the Danube navigation sector.** The safety and efficiency of Danube navigation depends to a large extent on the availability of qualified personnel. Danube navigation is currently experiencing a staffing shortage, which is also caused by a shortage of dedicated training and education opportunities in the Danube countries.

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Additionally, the existing education institutions partly apply different education curricula. In order to facilitate labour availability and mobility at the European level, harmonisation of education and training profiles should be pursued. Within this framework, the Danube countries shall undertake concrete and internationally coordinated efforts (e.g. based on the findings and outcomes of the South-East Europe project NELI – Cooperation Network for logistics and nautical education) in order to attract and educate young people for the profession of Danube skipper. Education initiatives in waterborne logistics shall produce experts for the integration of inland waterway transport into multimodal transport chains. Additional to a solid education also the compliance of the labour law and social law conditions in the inland navigation sector is essential for the efficiency and the high quality of services. Therefore in the sense of social coherence, as laid down in the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union, the increase of transport safety and fair competitive conditions between different modes of transport, the establishment of high quality jobs requires a harmonisation of social standards and provisions on community level. In this context and in line with the intention of the working time directive of the European Union (directive 2003/88/EC, Official Journal L 299 of 18.11.2003, page 9) standardised, fraud-resistant systems in the navigation sector as they exist already for example in the road transport (e.g. driving charts, digital tachograph) would be useful. Therefore it is necessary to present on European level proposals concerning records of international cross-border transport operations (e.g. digital tachograph, effective control of working time, driving and rest times).

- **Improve comprehensive waterway management of the Danube.** Waterway management is the prime responsibility of the national waterway management bodies. These organisations are responsible for the continuous maintenance of the waterway infrastructure (e.g. surveying and dredging activities). At the same time some of the waterway management bodies also have the competence for the implementation of flood protection and ecological measures (e.g. required by the EU Water Framework Directive). This reflects the different functions of the Danube, which is not only an important transport route but also a valuable ecosystem. In this respect, and also having in mind the international dimension of the Danube, the national waterway management bodies shall continue (e.g. reference to the South-East Europe project NEWADA – Network of Danube Waterway Administrations) and further intensify their cooperation in order to coordinate their activities and to enable know-how transfer between the various national administrations. This is also in line with the “Danube River Basin Management Plan 2009” which has defined a “Joint Programme of Measures” to be implemented by the Danube Region countries. Increased cooperation and know-how exchange between waterway management bodies shall improve their overall performance

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and thus secure balanced trade-offs between the different interests and functions of the Danube.

- **Examine potential effects of climate change on Danube navigation**

Climate change may have a significant impact on the future water flow regime of the Danube. Potential climate change would affect many utilisations and functions of the Danube, as for example agriculture and irrigation, hydropower energy production, flood protection, navigation and last but not least the ecosystem and its related fauna and flora. At the European level the issue climate change has been taken up as a priority action, calling for increased research in the field of climate models and the identification of potential adaptation measures. First research results (e.g. GLOWA (Globaler Wandel; global change) Danube project) show that climate change models for the Danube should also be carried out on a regional level in order to gain more accurate predictions.

With respect to Danube navigation there are a number of potential implications that climate change could have (e.g. positive and negative effects on navigability during the year due to changed flow regime). Consequently according adaptation strategies should be elaborated (e.g. flexible waterway management tools, adaptation measures related to the maintenance of the fairway and to vessel types) and coordinated between the Danube Region countries.

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## **(2) Priority Area: Upgrading of multimodal nodes as places for sustainable development and promotion of environment-friendly mobility**

### **Presentation of the issue:**

#### *Development of multimodal nodes and hubs of interoperable transport system*

Functional urban and rural regions are the engines of economic development in the Danube Region. Making full use of their potential requires the effective development of top-level sites disposing of attractive conditions, such as multi-modal, well-functioning international and intraregional connections. In this context multi-modal nodes play a significant role not only in terms of accessibility as result of the existing transport system but even more so in terms of optimal places for concentrating business and industry. Such a concentration reduced cost for the private actors (through shorter everyday commuting) and the public authorities providing industrial land but more importantly also cause lower environmental damage and is less polluting.

The Danube Region is characterized by a rather balanced potential accessibility of its individual parts. Only when taking into account air transport the capital regions stick out with much greater accessibility than the rest of the countries. However, the level of accessibility is relatively low, compared to the average of EU 27. Most of the NUTS-3 regions of the macro-region have potential multi-modal accessibility not even half as high as the European average. However, with the ongoing construction and up-grading of transport infrastructure along the major corridors the increase of accessibility (at least) in the Member States of the Danube Region is significantly higher than in EU 27.

Whereas the infrastructure investment in the corridors is showing positive results in terms of potential accessibility, the complementary investment in the capacity (and performance) of the nodes is lagging behind. These nodes are not only the capitals, where often the corridors meet or cross, but also and of the same importance, ports both for inland navigation and maritime, intermediary nodes along one corridor with interregional importance such as bridges or gateway locations at the external borders (particularly to the east).

Transport policy in Austria focuses on measures which aim to avoid unnecessary transport, shifting especially heavy goods transport from road to environmentally modes of transport such as railways, combined transport or inland waterway transport and handling those transport volumes which are still affected by road in an environmental friendly way. Promoting these modes of transport also contributes directly to significant reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.

Therefore, adequate capacity and quality of environmentally friendly alternatives to road transport have to be ensured by interlinking different modes of transport in an efficient way inter alia by offering adequate terminal

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facilities and by using containers which are compatible with different modes of transport. The promotion of intermodality and the intensified use of combined transport are consequently of utmost importance for the establishment for competitive alternatives to road transport also in the Danube Region. The promotion of measures for the support of the environmentally friendly transport modes rail, inland navigation and combined transport (such as financial support for investments in infrastructure, innovations and operations, fiscal incentives or regulative support measures) have to be further promoted in order to increase the capacity of these transport modes. Especially the Danube ports should be upgraded become trimodal logistic centres.

Regarding ports, especially the Danube ports should be upgraded to become trimodal logistics centres suited to encourage regional economic development. A good point of departure would be cooperation among ports, such as the ones which already exist in some parts of the region and which could be further intensified (see also Priority Area: Danube navigation).

#### *Environmental-friendly mobility*

The upgrading of multimodal nodes as places for sustainable development has to be in line with an environmental – friendly mobility system.

The guiding principles for traffic solutions can be derived from the three pillars of sustainable development:

- ecologically friendly by meeting targets for environmental and health objectives,
- economically profitable through efficient traffic management and good accessibility,
- socially fair through roadworthy traffic management and equitable mobility opportunities.

These environmental and health objectives should, in terms of integration of sustainable development and transport, be treated equal to economic and social objectives.

Infrastructure projects and their dimensions have to take account of the ecological conditions and conservation of natural areas and landscapes. Interferences and emissions have to be restricted in compliance with environmental legislation. In general less environmentally friendly transport such as trucks and cars should be shifted to more environmentally friendly transport systems such as rail and public transport as well as shipping.

In sensitive areas the most environmentally friendly and low emitting vehicles powered with renewable energy should be given priority.

By promoting mobility management an efficient, emission reducing and environmentally friendly mobility should be established especially in sensitive areas. Ecological needs should be in line with spatial- and traffic planning

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objectives, making use of the sustainable economic development particularly in tourism and contributing to the creation of Green Jobs.

Land use and the negative effects to the landscapes must be reduced to a minimum in sensitive areas.

**Main challenges:**

The main challenge here is to ensure that the increasing (potential) accessibility created by infrastructure investment is not set off by weak transport planning (on whichever level) or not sufficiently coordinated urban/spatial planning. Though this is mainly a task of the individual region (or country) it is understood that all of them face very similar issues: (a) the business driven, sometimes speculative development in the real estate market, leading to fragmented and/or uncoordinated investment within many locations and (b) the sectoral divide between the main transport modes, creating competition where cooperation is needed. Both leads to locations underperforming in terms of supply of energy-efficient and sustainable industrial areas and in terms of achieving a reasonable – again eco-efficient and sustainable – modal split and sustainable mobility within the entire region concerned.

E-mobility could play an important role in the future of urban and regional development in the Danube Region. Public transport in cities is a good example of using electricity as fuel, e.g. for tram or underground lines. A shift in individual mobility patterns from the individual “fossil” transport to an intermodal split of car sharing, public transport, increased walking and cycling and the usage of electric vehicles (2-wheels and 4-wheels) could significantly increase the attractiveness and quality of life in urban areas.

**Danube Region added value:**

High accessibility is an important factor in the development of regions and cities. It indicates agglomeration benefit and locational advantage and thus becomes important for the competitiveness of a territory. “Improvements in accessibility of regions and places currently underperforming may support cohesion and support a better balanced territory at regional, national and/or European scale, and help releasing territorial potentials currently underused to the benefit of European competitiveness.”<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, due to the development of sustainable mobility ecological needs regarding land use, sensitive areas and tourism areas are fostered.

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<sup>1</sup> ESPON (2009) p. 5

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## Actions:

- **Further develop nodal planning for multimodality.** The overlap of different freight and person transport leads in many nodes to congestion and loss of productivity, also terminal infrastructure is missing or little developed to combine the different modes. Beginning with corridor VII, the Danube axis, unbundling of types of transport by elimination of bottlenecks on feeder routes can lead to capacity increases in several cases. This would at the same time improve the conditions for location development on the spot and for shifting transport volumes to more energy efficient and environmentally friendly transport modes like rail and water. A good example and basis for this action field are the results of the INTERREG III A project CENTRAL (Central European Nodes of the Transport and Logistics), which was finished in 2008. This border-crossing umbrella project focussed on the improvement of the transport infrastructure between Austria and its neighbouring countries CZ, SK and HU. Networks between stakeholders have been set up in order to improve the quality of the transport system and logistic chains between the nodes and within the nodes – with a focus on sustainable transport modes such as railways and waterways.
- **Further develop environmentally sustainable transport.** Austria already invests in some rail infrastructure projects in the Danube axis to increase the capacity of the environmentally sustainable mode rail and increase reduce travel times in passenger traffic. New high capacity rail lines in tunnels and the new railway main station in Vienna, which are already under construction, are important links in the realisation of e.g. priority projects TEN - T 17 and TEN – T 22. An enhanced transnational cooperation between the relevant national, regional and local institutions and the relevant Corridor Managements should foster the improvement of the transport infrastructure in the Danube Region.
- **Further improve ports and develop port cooperation as one measure to develop multimodal nodes and to foster the interoperable transport systems.** Many inland ports in the Danube Region have either very specialised functions or have relied to large extent on land transport. This is mainly due to the limited role container transport has so far played on the Danube. This although container transport has been and will be the fastest growing segment in international (long haul) transport. The Danube ports need to act in unison to adapt their infrastructure and their logistic management to in order to attract container traffic to the Danube and thus contribute to higher efficiency of the overall transport system.
- **Development of substantive and organizational frameworks for the implementation of key projects such as master plans.** In this framework transport policy targets are defined and the structure for the management of key projects and their integration into the regional development is appointed (organization, funding, networking / interfaces,

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marketing, monitoring, controlling). The following priorities are to be strategically pooled: networking within the Danube countries including the local and regional authorities, cross linking of soft mobility offers (e.g. rail, bus, cycle, pedestrians) by mobility management, cross linking of relevant sectors (e.g. transport and tourism), cross linking of ecological, economic and social dimensions of sustainability, information, public relations and general awareness rising of possible solutions of mobility problems (keyword: openness to unconventional ideas), use of new environmental technologies, environmentally friendly propulsion systems and fuels, consideration of the needs of sensitive areas in plans and programs, especially in spatial and regional development, in the transport, infrastructure, tourism and energy sector at regional, national and international level.

- **Establish a transnational platform to develop e-mobility in agglomerations.** The integration of e-mobility could support the planning and implementation of transnational projects within the Danube Region. E-mobility could particularly simplify the further development of environmental orientated transport systems in cooperation with the private sector, projects within education and research and governance. This platform could be developed under the name „ELDA – Electric Danube“.
- **Further develop Intelligent Traffic Systems.** The quality of a transport node highly depends on the capability of its transport system. Existing problems such as congestion can be solved by investments in the transport infrastructure in order to remove bottlenecks or by introducing an efficient transport management system to optimize the existing capacity. Based on a pilot developed for the Vienna Region an intermodal route planner in real time could be spread to larger parts of the Danube Region in particular its important nodes like capital regions and major port regions.

#### Examples of projects and initiatives:

- **South North Axis (SoNorA):** The aim of this project (ETC South-East Europe; started in 2008) is to develop accessibility between the Adriatic and Baltic seas by making the network real through support for the completion of transport infrastructure, by activating and improving multimodal freight logistics services, by developing transnational action plans for future realisations and by supporting new regional development opportunities due to transport network improvements. As this North-South axis will cross the Danube there will be an added value for the development of the Danube Axis and its transport nodes.
- **Baltic-Adriatic Corridor (BAA):** One of the most important north-south routes in Europe and the easternmost crossing of the Alps connect the Baltic Sea with the Adriatic. It runs through Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria and Italy and thus traverses Europe's former fracture

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line to connect upwardly mobile economic regions in three new member countries with economically important agglomerations in Austria and northern Italy. The corridor forms important hinterland connections from the Baltic and the Adriatic to the economic areas Warszawa, Upper Silesia and Moravia, east and south-east Austria as well as northern Italy. In addition, it represents an important connection to other priority axes of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T): for example at the junction Vienna with the TEN 17 axis Paris-Vienna-Bratislava. It is thus one of the most important trans-European railway axes for both passenger and freight traffic.

- **Cross border electric mobility showcase - Twin City Connection Vienna-Bratislava:** Several international companies including the leading Austrian energy companies in the Electric Vehicles for Advanced Cities (EVA) project consortium applied for the EU Twin City cross border electric mobility showcase project under the EU Programme FP7-Transport-2010-TREN-1 “green car initiative”. One of the demonstration sides is the twin city Vienna-Bratislava. This project implemented between 2011 and 2013 aims to foster e-mobility in the Vienna-Bratislava-region. The decision about funding is expected in summer 2010.
- **Floating Container:** The Viennese port would like to initiate a transnational project in cooperation with other ports and/or partners of the private sector (e.g. logistics) in order to exploit the enormous potential of the container navigation. Thereby the upgrade of the required infrastructure in order to develop the most important partner ports as well as the establishment of a network within those ports should be focused. Main activities within this field could comprise the preparation of feasibility studies, the connection of ports, the development and implementation of projects.
- **European Digital Traffic Infrastructure Network for Intelligent Transport Systems (EDITS):** The traffic volume has increased considerably over the past years. This led to congestion within metropolitan areas. A flowing traffic system would allow a punctual traffic of people and goods and reduce negative impacts. Facing the same problem as many other regions, ITS Vienna Region decided to build up a common reference network graph. The reference network graph should fulfil the requirements of all relevant users. Therefore the Traffic Infrastructure Network Platform GIP has been developed. ITS Vienna Region as potential lead-partner has come up with a project idea within the Central Europe funding scheme on the implementation and the enhancement of ITS (traffic management, traffic planning and modelling, traffic information) on the basis of transnationally harmonised traffic geological data using the Traffic Infrastructure Network Platform GIP. Whereas the majority of the existing ITSs are built upon unimodal, country/region specific data sources, EDITS will use harmonised, multimodal (geo-coded) traffic data.

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- **Pan European Corridor VII:** This project evolved from the definition of the 10 Pan-European corridors. Austria took over the project coordination and Vienna the Corridor management (TINA Vienna). The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which was signed by the Ministers of Transport of all 10 Danube adjacent states in September 2001, constitutes the basis of the operations. The project aims to adjust all planned measures to establish the Danube as a major European transport artery. An important part of activities is the cooperation with the ICPDR. In this context, the presently most important document, the "Joint Statement on Guiding Principles for the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin", coordinates environmental issues with navigation and sets out the rules for further development of activities for all stakeholders. The 10 Danube riparian countries of the Steering Committee of Corridor VII adopted on 26 January 2010 a contribution paper towards the EU Strategy for the Danube Region containing all actions requested.
  - **Pan European Corridor X:** The Multimodal Pan-European Transport Corridor X consists of the sections Salzburg - Ljubljana - Zagreb - Beograd - Nis - Skopje - Veles - Thessaloniki including the branches: A: Graz - Maribor - Zagreb; B: Budapest - Novi Sad - Beograd; C: Nis - Sofia ( - Istanbul via Corridor IV); and D: Veles - Bitola - Florina (- via Egnatia to Igoumenitsa). The aim of the cooperation between the participating countries is the development of main and ancillary infrastructures on Corridor X. The development of the Corridor X should include maintenance, reconstruction, rehabilitation, upgrading and new construction of main and ancillary infrastructures as well as its operation and use with a view to fostering the most efficient and environmentally friendly transport modes (infrastructure and services). The co-operation furthermore aims at perceiving and defining prerequisites and conditions for the most efficient use of funds and know-how provided by public and private sources. The Hellenic Ministry of Transport and Communications has established a Technical Secretariat of the Steering Committee for Pan-European Corridor X, the work is going on since 1999.
  - **Pan European Corridor IV:** Corridor IV is a multi-modal Northwest - Southeast transport link running from Dresden/Nürnberg (Germany), via Praha (Czech Republic), Wien (Austria)/Bratislava (Slovakia), Budapest (Hungary) to Romania. In Romania Corridor IV divides into two branches. The northern branch runs from Arad via Bucuresti to Constanta at the Black Sea, the southern branch from Arad via Craiova to Sofija (Bulgaria) and divides again. One branch running further to Thessaloniki (Greece) and the other to Istanbul (Turkey). The chairmanship of the Steering Committee is currently held by Austria, the co-chairmanship by Turkey.
  - **Main Line for Europe:** The "Main Line for Europe" is the railway connection between Paris – Strasbourg – Karlsruhe - Stuttgart- Munich – Salzburg – Vienna and Budapest. There is a cooperation of railway operators, regions and cities along this axis aiming to coordinate the

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construction of infrastructure, to optimise the services and to promote the initiative. The technical secretary is supported by the town Karlsruhe.

- **South East European Transport Axis Cooperation (SEETAC):** The SEETAC project is funded under the South East Europe Programme. The Project area is an important transit one within the European Transport Network and an essential region to link Europe with the Far East. The level of services offered along this area is below the EU standards and suffers from scarce investments and lack of transnational cooperation. As the concept of Corridors was substituted with the concept of Axis (HLG Report 2005), the national approach to create domestic high speed connections without a transnational approach has become obsolete and inadequate. SEETAC aims at solving the cross-border bottlenecks and the lack of harmonization and becoming an instrument to solve both the administrative problems, such as missing institutional and legal transnational framework at border crossings, and the operational ones, such as lack of common safety, security and environmental standards, lack of harmonisation of transport modes. The overall project objective is the establishment and implementation of an effective and coordinated SETA framework, promoting and fostering the institutional cooperation between Pan-European Corridors structures and Member States in order to reach the EU's objectives of (i) transparency & information reliability; (ii) harmonised and efficient institutional framework and; (iii) rapid implementation of the transport priority projects.

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### **(3) Priority Area: Sustainable energy supply**

#### **Presentation of the issue:**

##### *Energy supply*

Taking into account the raising energy needs and the lack of energy efficiency as well as the shortage of fossil fuels, the topic “Energy” gained increasingly significance within the socio-political discussion over the last years. Thus, the European Union requested the Member States and its Regions to undertake concrete steps forward referring to the slogan “20-20-20 by 2020”. This principle aims a 20% increase in energy efficiency, a 20% cut in greenhouse gases and a 20% share of renewables in total EU energy consumption, all by the year 2020. Thus, most EU Member States of the Danube Region have to think and act towards a stronger promotion of renewable energies. E.g. in 2007, the average share of renewable energy consumption in the Danube countries amounted only to about 9%. But the necessity to think and act in the direction of more energy supplies from renewable sources prevails also in non-Member States.

Regarding the mix of renewable energies hydro power ranks first in the Danube Region. Thus the Danube River plays a key role in energy production. Beside hydro power and biomass in certain Danube countries (e.g. Hungary and the Czech Republic) the development of other renewable energies, in particular wind and solar, is only at a very early stage in its development. Thus, by special land use planning and analysis on regional level it should be demonstrated how renewable energies can be exploited. For instance, the production of biomass on inoperative agricultural areas, without a higher value of natural protection should be used beside wind, solar and geothermic energy. However the Danube countries present high potential to develop other renewable like wind energy and biomass.

However, some Danube countries provide profound experiences and know-how which could serve as important starting points and could be further developed in order to implement a sustainable energy strategy within the whole Danube Region. For instance in Austria there exist different approaches in developing and exploiting environmental technologies concerning cluster initiatives in the fields of “Construction”, “Energy” or “Environment” which could be taken up to other cities and regions.

##### *Energy systems*

Next to improving energy efficiency and increasing supply of renewable energies, the better integration of the electricity and gas systems as well as security of supply aspects have to be prioritised in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

The Danube Region plays an essential role as a transit corridor for energy especially from countries of the Black & Caspian Sea Region. In this context

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the realisation of the Nabucco Gas pipeline is one of Europe's most important energy infrastructure projects to strengthen Europe's security of supply. The European Commission underlines that Nabucco is a priority for the EU and has the highest potential to open up the new gas supplies in the Caspian Sea region and in the Middle East.

**Main challenges:**

By now the attributes of natural spaces and its possibilities to produce renewable energies as well as the local energy consumption have not been linked. Analysis on regional level demonstrate to which extent renewable energies can be exploited. Within the approach there has to be made a difference between rural areas with decentralized supply strategies and (urban) areas with priority setting, e.g. priority regarding the usage of geothermic energy, fostering high efficient combined heat and power production with appropriate development of district heating and district cooling systems. Here, spatial planning is challenged to find appropriate forms of settlements.

Furthermore, respective incentives have to be set in order to facilitate the conditions that are necessary to make renewable energies a real attractive alternative (e.g. in terms of the economic aspects, acceptance, etc.). The main challenge here is to take up positive experience for investments in other cities and regions.

Regarding energy networks, the focus must lie on transnational energy initiatives aiming at the better integration of the energy markets, the development of smart, upgraded energy infrastructures, the improvement of the interoperability and safety of transnational networks. Furthermore it is also of utmost importance to enable additional and diversified energy supply and - routes to strengthen Europe's energy security of supply.

The electricity market faces also new challenges arising from market liberalisation as well as the important aim to increase the share of distributed generation and renewable energy resources within the power networks.

**Danube Region added value:**

Once the required conditions are created, additional projects in the regions, communes and cities will be implemented. Those projects will reduce the dependency on energy imports on the one side and focus the individual regions more on own resources securing additional jobs while creating a more competitive market for energy supplies. Furthermore, a regional approach to energy security offers significant advantages both in terms of improved utilisation of existing supply and production capacities as well as optimising future investments. The joint realisation of energy projects by member states of the Danube Region - for instance in the fields of networks, storage and electricity production - should be supported.

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## Actions:

- **Further develop existing networks** of Universities, Research Institutes as well as organizations implementing cross-border or transnational programmes in the fields of renewable energy and sustainable energy supply. E.g. the project “ENERGY FUTURE” implemented by several Austrian and Czech Republic Regions sets a signal concerning a common energy future. The project aims to establish sustainable cooperation networks within the field of efficient energy use and renewable energies in order to make use of the available potential, e.g. the technical know-how.
- **Further develop the network of Climate Alliance.** Founded already in 1990, Climate Alliance is the biggest communal climate protection network in Europe. Since the foundation of the association seven Danube countries joined the alliance comprising in total around 1.500 cities, municipalities and districts. Austria is represented with even more than 800 communities. The objective of member cities and municipalities is first of all the reduction of greenhouse emissions. For achieving this goal local climate strategies are developed and implemented, especially in the energy and transport sectors. In order to raise the public’s awareness about climate protection respective measures are put into practice. Members can benefit of several incentives, e.g. getting advice for local climate change policies, getting inspired from other cities and communes experience at conferences or finding partners for implementation of projects. This Alliance has potential to be further developed in other Danube countries.
- **Complementary focus on co-operation in energy efficiency promotion in urban areas.** Urban areas and cities have specific energy needs due to the extremely high energy requirement per square meter. Therefore decentralized supply is hardly possible as high-efficient technologies are reasonably applicable mainly in bigger units. Reducing the air pollution at local level and keeping certain cost effectiveness in balance lead to specific technologies and infrastructure (e.g. district heating system based on waste incineration plants and high efficient cogeneration plants, development of district cooling technology as well as the implementation of innovative geothermal projects). A sustainable energy policy in urban areas must focus on improving energy efficiency when facing the challenges with regard to climate change and securing energy supply. This means a reasonable handling of renewable and fossil resources, complemented by measures to reduce growing energy consumption and promote energy saving in all sectors. One example for managing the energy efficiency in urban areas could be the Municipal Energy Efficiency Programme (Städtisches Energieeffizienz-Programm – SEP) of the City of Vienna. It has set out on a new energy policy path, as it concentrates on demand side aspects and brings the topics of improving energy efficiency and energy saving to the forefront of energy

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policy. The programme comprises and co-ordinates more than 100 single measures, providing guidelines for the city's demand side energy policy up to 2015.

- **Further develop storage capacity.** A secure energy supply for Europe cannot rely on the construction of pipelines only. Additional flexibility through storage capacity is therefore necessary as well. Support should be given to the realisation of storage projects in all countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Additionally, the further development of cross-border interconnections, as well as the provision of reverse gas flow in networks and higher investments in liquefied natural gas (LNG) have to be improved to ensure a functioning European gas market.
- **Further develop smart, upgraded electricity infrastructures.** A focus should be laid on cross-border connections, the improvement of the interoperability and the safety of transnational networks, the long-distance transport and a better integration of renewable energy sources, e.g. the Vienna – Győr 380 kV Power line.
- **Obtain a clear political commitment of all Danube countries and develop a stable legal framework.** In order to promote a better integration of the energy infrastructure system and measures to improve energy of supply within the region the participating countries in the Danube Strategy a clear commitment is required first. Additionally, a legal framework is of utmost importance for the successful realisation of energy infrastructure investments which are needed to increase energy security. Adequate investment incentives have to be provided.
- **Support the mobilization of private capital.** In order to fulfil the framework regarding sustainable energy security, financial resources have to be mobilized, e.g. by increasing legal certainty for infrastructure projects with long payback periods within Public private partnership models.

#### Examples of projects:

- **Regional and local energy autarky:** Energy autarky not only diminishes dependency on energy import but creates also new jobs and valorises regional assets in a sustainable way. In Austria exists already several such initiatives who could be used as good example (e.g. in Güssing, Großschönau, Bruck an der Leitha or Lasse). For instance, Upper Austria already covers one third of its primary energy from renewable energy sources. Another joint initiative implemented by Upper Austria and South Bohemia aims to provide energy advice and promote cooperation in the field of sustainable energy production and use. Such examples could be used for new projects. Furthermore, in Burgenland a similar joint initiative named ESPAN (Energy strategy for Pannonia) was implemented together with the western Hungarian provinces. Burgenland already produces 60% of its electricity from renewable sources and aims for full energy autarky. For this purpose the initiative EKKO (Energy

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concepts for Communes) is launched where energy concepts of communes will be elaborated with the long term goal of full energy autarky.

- **Renewable Energy Cooperation of Rural Areas (RECORA):** This initiative of seven partners from five countries (Austria, Germany, the Republic Czech, Hungary and Greece) is supported by the EU programme Interreg III C. The main focus lies on the economic utilization of alternative energy resources and on the preparation of projects. Here, newest ecological findings and all necessary standards play an important role. Furthermore, the most recent and important issues in regional development policies of rural areas are taken into account. Due to RECORA new jobs are created, alternative use of existing agricultural products are processed, analyses of waste components (wood, grass, bio waste etc.) with regard to their usability in the energy production process are developed and exchanged.
- **Co-operation in the design and implementation of energy efficiency measures to promote energy efficient technologies and awareness raising in urban areas:** Co-operation, know-how transfer, exchange of experiences and best practice examples gained with the design and implementation of measures to increase energy efficiency (e.g. lessons learnt during the development and implementation of the Municipal Energy Efficiency Programme – SEP of the City of Vienna).
- **BSP – Bratislava – Schwechat Oil Pipeline:** Austria and Slovakia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to intensify the collaboration between Austria and Slovakia in the oil and gas business. The planned construction of a crude oil pipeline between Bratislava and Schwechat, as envisaged in the memorandum, is of pivotal strategic importance as it closes the gap in the Trans-European pipeline network.

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#### **(4) Priority Area: Network of clusters, cooperation of enterprises and research and technology development (RTD) for enhanced competitiveness**

##### **Presentation of the issue:**

One of the most widely used tools in regional policy to enhance competitiveness and adapt economies is to foster clusters. Clusters are defined as geographically close groups of value – added chains of interconnected companies and associated institutions such as research institutes, business associations as well as local authorities, linked by shared strategies and visions of development, common technologies and skills. Cluster projects can be developed to respond to a very wide range of regional problems and opportunities; they are an adaptable type of intervention.

The knowledge and innovation landscape in the Danube Region is characterised by strong regional disparities. Regions with comparatively high RTD intensity, i.e. more than 2,5% of GDP spent on RTD, can be discerned in South Germany, parts of Austria and in the capital city regions of the Czech Republic (plus other regions in Moravia), Hungary and Slovenia. Regions in south-east Europe and in the new Member States with generally low RTD expenditure coincide with the fastest growing RTD intensities (such as those of Romania) and innovation hot-spots (Bratislava region) of above-average importance.

The establishment, development and promotion of clusters in the Danube Region requires the use of existing knowledge as well as the further development and internationalisation of networks between RTD institutions, the private sector and local authorities. Such networks could also be used as door opener into all bordering regions of the Danube countries. Furthermore, the financial crisis has created new needs for action in RTD and innovation, such as stopping the decline in private venture capital. Therefore the need for international project funding for RTD, e.g. European Framework Programmes, increases. They support especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to realise their innovative ideas. Creating critical mass for a joint participation in such programmes should be focused. Additionally, companies and organisations need competent support in the course of the concretisation of their projects, the selection of suitable RTD support programmes (research and technology development and innovation), the integration of expert know-how, the submissions for intellectual property rights and the identification of possibilities for their economic exploitation.

Moreover, the further development and internationalisation of cooperation and networks focusing stronger on innovation could create a pool of potential partners for RTD cooperation projects.

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### **Main challenges:**

Although generally on rise, trade flows, cooperation and networks within the regions and cities of the Danube Region are still comparatively low (except those between Austria and Germany) and can be extended. The main challenge here is to further develop and foster transnational business activities and networks, particularly through acting, thinking and transnational cooperation between cluster organisations (companies, associated institutions, research institutes, private companies, local authorities) which present a minimum on diversity.

Another challenge might be the linguistic barrier because cooperative RTD communication is an essential success factor. For instance, in the German-speaking Regions of the Danube Region a chronic lack of technical staff (e.g. certified engineers) prevails. At the same time, eastern countries of the Danube Region have partially a strong tradition concerning well qualified engineers which presents veritable potentials for cooperation. In the field of exclusive research institutes as well as within cross-regional innovation strategies there exists synergy potential.

### **Added value:**

The strengthening of potential partners in the Danube countries as well as the further development of the networking capacities on side of already existing network nodes and stable/well-known and potential partners may create more effective and stable networks. Through the support of international networking activities important leverages and usage of synergies can be achieved.

### **Actions:**

- **Establishment and internationalisation of High Tech Centres** focusing on RTD promising fields. Such technology and competence centres would make use of the existing potential in this field and valorise the Danube Region in terms of innovation but also of economical aspects.
- **Establishment and promotion of research cooperation** between Universities and Institutes of Applied Sciences within different countries of the Danube Region. Networks would stimulate and valorise the existing research institutes. Innovative communication and working methods like "Peer-Learning" could facilitate the implementation of such network building.
- **Promotion of cooperation between the private and the public research sector** in order to interlink private companies and university / non-university research entities as well as institutes of applied sciences. The establishment and enlargement of open cross-border innovation and research spaces would not only stronger link science, the art and educational sector and the private sector but also create inter-generative

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and interdisciplinary structures. Furthermore, the establishment of trans-regional and multilingual platforms could offer services and production of the creative industry.

- **Strategic promotion of young researchers** with international recognition and high innovation potential. Innovative cooperation projects within clusters and networks should be promoted.
- **Establishment of a “virtual” Danube Region** in order to make the macro-region more visible from outside and to create a cooperation platform for actors within the Danube Region.
- **Cooperative opening up of new international markets** by the means of cooperation between experienced and inexperienced as well as large-scale and SME within specific value chains in cluster initiatives. The fields of mechanical engineering and mechatronics wherein certain Danube countries provide strong competences could serve as point of contact. Further fields to open up are Eco-energy and Environmental Technology, Environmentally-friendly Mobility, Plastics Technology, Material Technology, Health, Life Science, ICT and Creative Industry.
- **Establishment of logistical cooperation** which comprises a network between training facilities and advanced training within the fields of Logistic and Transport.
- **Establishment and promotion of transnational cooperation between regional and national Funding-Service-Centres** within the Danube Region to build critical masses for a concerted participation in European and international funding programmes.

#### Examples of projects:

- **Cooperation between the software park Hagenberg and the Johannes Kepler University of Linz:** The existing cooperation between these institutions established a node between scientific research and exploitation of the research results in collaboration with the private sector.
- **ACCelerating regional competitiveness and sector-based excellence through innovation management tools and techniques (ACCESS; ETC Central Europe):** This initiative aims to support upcoming regions in Central and Eastern Europe. In the context of the Interreg Central Europe programme best examples (structures, innovation potential, cooperation) and training programmes in the fields of food, biotechnology and mechatronics are developed by means of SWOT-analyses. Participating Danube countries are Hungary, Slovakia, Germany, the Republic Czech and Austria.
- **Making Progress and Economic Enhancement a Reality for SMEs (MaPEeR SME):** This project was submitted in 2009 by the consortium of SME/ Innovation-Consultants, Universities, Enterprise Europe Network-Offices and members of existing SME high level experts. It aims to

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acquire comprehensive insight into the design, implementation and impact of existing SME research and innovation programmes and initiatives at European Union, national and regional level and convey it in the most appropriate way to SME stakeholders and policy-makers. Participating Danube countries are Germany, Hungary, Slovakia and Austria.

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## **(5) Priority Area: Fostering agglomeration networks with focus on green technologies for the mitigation of climate change effects**

### **Presentation of the issue:**

Compared to other European macro-regions the Danube Region is including the greatest number of capital cities. Five out of its twelve capitals are riparian or very close to the Danube itself. But not only capital cities are rather evenly distributed over the territory, also a great number of large and medium-sized cities, smaller towns and regions structure the Danube Region and present a relatively polycentric structure. The balanced urban and regional structure offers a great potential for sustainable development, if adequate use is made of the networks between the cities, municipalities and the regions. This encompasses all sorts of functional and institutional networks supporting local and regional development. However, almost all regions, cities and municipalities of the Danube Region are facing grave challenges to their further development. The nature and source of such challenges vary greatly but they have in common the need for innovative and sustainable solutions. Also the linkages between urban and rural spaces and between cities and regions within the macro-region require new forms of cooperation between levels and across administrative borders. The most important areas of development of the urban agglomerations are

- urban and housing development, where matters such as climate change mitigation and social aspects play a major role and have repercussions on services of general interest (public transport, social services, health, etc.)
- securing sustainable mobility both in regional and urban development contexts
- coping with the economic structural changes caused by the ongoing globalisation and the resulting issues on the local and regional labour markets
- maintenance and up-grading of public services and amenities in view of raising economic pressure and demographic changes
- also concepts and measures to ensure sustainable mobility are of special importance in regional and urban development contexts.

For all of these groups of challenges there exist innovative and environmentally-friendly technologies (green technologies) as particularly effective means of solutions and enhancement of urban development and quality of life, which are not fully exploited in the Danube Region. They can be found in architecture and housing renovation (e.g. passive house), in water management, waste and sewage management, energy services aimed at SMEs and the household sector, as well as in renewable energy generation and in information and communication technologies and transport technologies, such as traffic management systems.

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In order to accelerate the dissemination of innovations and enhance problem resolution capabilities urban and regional networks in the Danube macro-region need to be further developed. Even though there exists already a close cooperation between some of the capitals and selected regions within the Danube Region the exchange of know-how on issues like green technologies the large and medium sized cities and regions has remained limited.

**Main challenges:**

Most of the economic and social development problems of the Danube Region can only be overcome by increased efforts from its LRAs (Local and Regional Authorities). These territorial authorities face the challenge of bridging traditional borders both of territories and of sectors. And they can do so most effectively in the area of new, innovative areas among which green technologies rank highest. The Danube Region Strategy aims at giving additional backing and endurance to the existing networks – transnational or cross-border – and to encourage new ones.

**Danube Region added value:**

The transnational cooperation between the cities, municipalities and the regions support local and regional development as well as territorial cohesion. Furthermore it provides the foundations for balancing the European core-periphery pattern. The dissemination and further development of green technologies will help to improve the productive capacity of cities, while also protecting the environment and creating new jobs. It will also add to the attainment of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy within the Danube Region in particular with regard to eco-efficiency, the employment objectives and innovation of SMEs and social inclusion.

**Actions:**

- **Initiate Urban Technology Networks** focusing on different areas of urban development such as (a) eco-efficient housing, (b) solid waste disposal and waste water technologies (c) public transport and non-motorised traffic, (d) green public procurement, etc. The networks should encompass public authorities and public companies like service providers on one hand side but also private technology providers and research and technology development institutions.
- **Establish a mechanism in order to exchange mutual knowledge of agglomeration development strategies of functionally connected regions and cities** like it has been started with the CUPA (co-operative Urban Planning Approaches) project. Such a strategic action on urban development planning will eventually lead to faster dissemination of good practice and the detection of promising fields of concrete cooperation on public authority level and for business.

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- **Creation of structures and information** for dealing with the impacts of migration-induced social, economical and cultural changes in the framework conditions of urban and rural development. To build up a body of knowledge and pool experiences from different local and regional entities could be the best way to find new ways. Besides the big questions of development like employment, climate change and transport this could also include small scale actions like e.g. the temporary use of abandoned shops by creative industry from partner regions and cities. This would also have a clearly positive effect on the emergence of a regional identity of the Danube Region.

In this context the experiences and strategies in the area of integration – and diversity-policies, especially of the agglomerations in the Danube Region, should be shared and cooperation between the relevant institutions should be strengthened. The City of Vienna could offer its experiences on strategies and instruments like the Vienna Integration Concept, the Integration – and Diversity Monitoring System, or the model of the Vienna Immigration Commission within transnational cooperation networks.

- **Building Metropolitan Regions** in the Danube Region. The Danube Regions as a whole has the potential of counter weighing to some extent the metropolitan polygon in NW-Europe and could eventually become one Global Economic Integration Zone. This demands though a dedicated effort to develop the existing agglomerations, no matter if they are within national borders, or border-crossing or even transnational (addressing more than 2 countries) as is the case in the CENTROPE Region. For a start a loose platform of existing and emerging metropolis regions should be initiated in order to establish a framework for learning and development of common ideas.
- **Elaborate a Danube Region Data- and Knowledge Pool.** The elaboration of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region has shown – as before the programming of the European territorial cooperation (ETC) programmes for Central Europe and South-East Europe – impressively how little comparable useful data for the whole macro-region is readily available and comparable (internally and with the EU). Even less traceable is the knowledge about relevant trends and structures within the Danube Region. At least the interventions from EU level of the next financing period should be based on a more solid knowledge base. This demands a comprehensive process of research and analysis in which all Danube countries need to be included. Part of such a Data- and Knowledge Pool could be a regular survey on quality of life in the Danube Region.

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### Examples of projects:

- **CENTROPE (Central Europe Region):** Initiated in 2003, 16 cities and regions of Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary are working jointly on the development of the Central European Region. Based on the results and experiences made so far, CENTROPE is extending many areas of urban and regional development, including location marketing, innovation policy, ICT co-operation and spatial planning. Centrope presently (CENTROPE Capacity, CENTROPE-TT, ETC Central Europe, 2009 – 2012, lead partner: City of Vienna) is aiming both at deepening the co-operation within the cooperation area and spreading to other potential transnational networks of cities and regions. The experiences of this project could be a basis to develop a transnational project in order to establish a framework for “Building Metropolitan Regions”.
- **POLY\_CE (Metropolisation and Polycentric Development in Central Europe) (ESPON - European Spatial Planning Observation Network):** The project aims at describing the status and the process of metropolisation in different metropolitan regions in Central and Eastern Europe. In accordance with relevant stakeholders the major cities and their surroundings will be analysed and compared with regard to their economic, social and environmental potentials. The functional relations within this network of metropolises will be discovered. This kind of benchmarking will reveal specific strengths and weaknesses of competing metropolitan regions. On the one hand these profiles will be transferred to applicable policy recommendations and the definition of reasonable strategic projects strengthening the territorial capital of the regions concerned. On the other hand the comparison of the specific characteristics will show complementarities and dichotomies of the main economic functions and can be used as an empirical base for cross-border co-operation and can therefore help to support a concerted polycentric development in that region. The participating cities are Bratislava, Budapest, Ljubljana, Prague and Vienna.
- **Urban technologies and strategies – transfer and enhancement:** The City of Vienna/TINA VIENNA Urban Technologies and Strategies GmbH initiated a transnational project in order to transfer know-how and to further develop and implement environmental friendly urban technologies and strategies in agglomerations of the Danube Region. Therefore workshops, symposia, web based data bases and coordination projects should support the implementation of know-how transfer.

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## **(6) Priority Area: Water management and flood prevention**

### **The Water issue in the Danube Region at large:**

A commonly accepted Danube regional strategy requires the development or existence of transnational agreed policies and goals. These are best to achieve where cross-border links and an atmosphere of trust have been established.

This is the case for the water sector including the whole complex of drinking water supply.

In 1998 the “Convention on cooperation for the protection and sustainable use of the Danube River” had entered into force, valid not only for the Danube as a line but for the waters in the whole Danube basin. Amongst presently 14 “Danubian countries” Austria together with seven other EU-member states and six non-EU states is party to this convention.

For steering the activities under this convention the “International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River” (ICPDR) and its supportive structure (Secretariat and Working groups) have been set up. ICPDR could develop substantial profile and expertise in all water pertaining matters, foremost to mention water management and water protection, flood protection and freshwater ecology.

Austria wants to ensure that the expertise of ICPDR is acknowledged and that ICPDR gets involved in all issues and developments under the EU Strategy, where water protection and water management could be concerned in a transnational way.

Along the requirements of the EU-Water Framework-Directive all Danube countries, irrespective of being member states or not, have endeavoured to cooperate for their implementation and have end of 2009, after a ten years elaboration process, achieved their most remarkable product, the joint “Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP)”. This plan provides specific information on the prevailing status of the waters of the Danube, of the given deficits and on needed measures for remediation in order to achieve the main goal, a good status or potential of the Danube waters.

Austria wants to ensure that the DRBMP is seen as the key information source for the identification, prioritisation and financial promotion of remediation measures in the countries of the Danube Region.

Facing the challenges concerning flood disasters which have not only a negative impact on natural landscapes and biodiversity but also on social and economic issues (e.g. human life, settlements, etc) flood prevention becomes also of particular importance. E.g. in 2002 and 2006 the flood events occurring in the Danube Region caused significantly damages. It is assumed that the effects of floods that impacted the Danube countries in the last years were amplified because of environmental and economical reasons primarily due to

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direct human activities. Another reason may be regionally varying impacts of climate change, such as changes in water availability and quality, more frequent and intense heat waves, changes in flood risk and more frequent extreme weather events which could affect cities and human settlements, infrastructure, land use and socio-economic activities.

Thus, a coordination process demanded also by the EU-Flood-Directive (Directive on the assessment and management of flood risks) is currently under development, which has as its goals the formulation of sub-basin Flood Protection Action Plans and finally a single Danube-wide Flood Management Plan.

Austria wants to ensure that projects in the field of protection from natural hazards with border crossing effects should be linked and coordinated with the ICPDR.

All aspects of the future Danube Water Cooperation are contained in a Danube Ministerial Declaration "Danube Basin: Shared Waters-Joint Responsibilities" adopted on February 16, 2010.

The recently adopted Danube Ministerial Declaration 2010 provides insight in all issues at stake within the water-oriented cooperation of the Danubian countries.

#### **The Water issues in the Danube Region in detail:**

Actions jointly needed in the Danube Basin:

- further development of ICPDR's data- and information collection tools and systems (the joint geo information system (GIS) coupled database, the Trans-National Monitoring Network (TNMN) and the Joint Danube Survey)
- development of a code of good practice acknowledged in the whole Danube Region for an environment – friendly agriculture
- development of jointly acknowledged guiding principles on integrating environmental aspects in the use of existing hydropower plants, including a possible increase of their efficiency, as well as in the planning and construction of new hydropower plants
- introduction of a legal ban of the use of poly-phosphate in laundry detergents throughout the Danube Region
- implementation of a feasibility study for the issue to enable the sturgeon as the lead fish species of the Danube Region to migrate and pass the Iron Gate hydro-power plants and – when positive answers have been found – a project for this purpose
- reducing knowledge deficits, development and transfer of tools, methods and guidelines concerning the safeguarding of drinking water supply, especially in the context of spatial planning

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- development of a Climate Adaptation Strategy for the Danube River basin.

Actions needed in the Danube Region:

- Support for the major investments in building or upgrading the sewerage system including wastewater treatment plants
- Support for the major investments in the enhancement of flood-protection schemes throughout the Danube basin including relevant bi- and multilateral projects on transboundary rivers
- Support for major investments in remediation projects to cope hydro-morphological deficiencies including the issue of enabling migratory fish species to widen their living areas and ensure self-sustaining life conditions in the Danube Region
- Support for strengthening the institutional and administrative capacities in the water sector including needed investments for investigating water quality (laboratories capacity, quality control systems)
- Support for strengthening and building public awareness for water and nature protection, especially within the youth
- Support for investigating and developing remediation measures for water – hazardous producing or abandoned industrial sites and waste deposits
- Support for developing codes of good practice in (industrial) water – hazardous production sites and ensuring the implementation of essential precautionary measures for avoiding accidental pollution.

#### **Danube Region added value:**

Improvement of water and environment in an integrated manner respecting all interdependencies will contribute to ensure sustainable living conditions in the Danube Region. It is hoped that the Danube Region Strategy turns out to be an instrument which helps to accelerate the implementation of above represented actions.

There is an urgent need to overcome the huge diversity of living circumstances in the Danube Region. The water sector is a part of this diversity.

#### **Actions:**

- **Set up an international risk management and emergency planning approach.** The interrelation between environmental impacts caused by human activities and socio-economic sources necessitates an international risk management and emergency planning approach. As most rivers cross national frontiers, preventive flood measures cannot be implemented exclusively at the national level because the river basins exposed to floods in one country largely depend on preventive measures taken in other countries. In order to reduce flood risks natural retention,

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cross-border flood protection and the reduction of hazards should be focused by the Danube countries.

- **Transnational cooperation for a climate change adaptation strategy in the Danube Region.** In order to develop a transnational climate change adaptation strategy region, vulnerabilities and measures for adaptation to climate change have to be taking into account. This includes the elaboration of political and scientific capacity and know-how for a climate adaption strategy in the Danube Region, the prioritization of climate change effects and assessment of vulnerabilities in the multistress-environment of the Danube Region as well as the identification of potential adaptation measures, their coordination and implementation.
- **Assessment of pollutant discharges taking into account pollution from point and diffuse sources in the Danube system.** These include the assessment of development, trends by nutrient, hazardous and organic pollution as well as the introduction of environment-friendly agriculture. Moreover, groundwater quality and quantity should be given more attention as it is used as drinking water in considerable parts of the Danube Region. These action aims also to obtain an increased understanding of processes and the links between surface water, groundwater and dependant terrestrial ecosystems.

#### Examples of projects:

- **ETC South-East Europe project DANUBE FLOODRISK:** Within this project parts of the Floods Directive shall be implemented in the Danube Region. The ETC SEE project aims to develop and produce stakeholder-oriented hazard and risk maps for the Danube floodplains, in order to provide adequate risk information for water management, spatial planning and the general public. Thereby transnational cooperation including the Danube countries in order to harmonize methods and data is of great importance. Another focus lies on three pilot projects for the implementation of the maps on municipal or regional levels (in Austria, Romania, Bulgaria), to develop agreed plans for measures in these areas.
- **Coordinated implementation of the Water Framework Directive, Fauna-Flora-Habitat Directive / Birds Directive (Natura 2000) and Floods Directive in the Danube Region:** Water should be used in a sustainable way regarding navigation, fisheries and hydropower and while taking into account the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and guiding principles on integrating environmental aspects. Furthermore, “green belt” and umbrella / leading species aiming at establishing a transboundary living space network and ecological connectivity of aquatic and terrestrial habitats should be identified. The development of the Danube as an international waterway has led to a change in the composition of species in the aquatic fauna and some

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parts of the Danube River are in particular characterized by neobiota (“alien” species). Yet, there is insufficient information as regards the impact of these species and it is to be expected that changing conditions (climate change, extension of the waterway) will increase the problem. An assessment of endangered species and habitats, migration of species and the issue of “alien” species should therefore be included in the monitoring of the aquatic environment. Moreover, a transboundary early warning system for the Danube catchment area needs to be improved in order to ensure a consistent information system for Floods and low flows (including the issue of retention areas / flood plains) (cross-linking to priority area Biodiversity nature and soil protection).

- **CC-WaterS:** The South East Europe programme, implemented at transnational level is facing the challenge of ensuring water supply in a changing climate. The lead partner Vienna (Waterworks) and further 17 project partners of nine SEE countries will identify and evaluate resulting impacts on availability and safety of public drinking water supply due to the existing and future influences of climate change for several future decades.

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## **(7) Priority Area: Biodiversity and environmental protection**

### **Presentation of the issue:**

#### *Biodiversity*

The river and riverine areas define precious natural landscapes and include the largest conservation area among Europe's rivers. The delta of the Danube River is one of the world's largest wetlands featuring unique fauna and flora, as well as thirty different types of ecosystems. The Danube Region is home to over 2,000 plant species, over 5,000 animal species and is of special significance for ensuring biodiversity.

The Danube and its tributaries are particularly rich in valuable, near-natural sites of varying conservation categories. Protected areas are hotspots of biodiversity and, therefore, play a key role for its conservation. The participating Austrian Länder alone boast three national parks, two of them extending across borders. Thus, these sites need to be safeguarded and further developed. This signifies that enhanced networking, management measures and soft tourism are required to maintain biodiversity and the use of these sites as natural compensation. Many of the nature conservation tasks cannot be solved by single protected areas. There is the strong need for transnational cooperation as well as for integration in spatial planning. There is great interest in cooperation and exchange of experience at all levels (supranational institutions such as UNESCO, responsible ministries, regions, cities, towns, international NGOs, sites, park operators, etc.) concerning issues of sustainable environmental development.

Moreover, the Danube countries commit themselves to take part in international agreements like the Convention on biodiversity. Furthermore the Member States are part of Natura 2000, a common framework that aims to protect wild plants, animals and habitats comprising special areas of conservation designated by Member States in accordance with the provisions of the Habitat Directive. Natura 2000 is not only a strategy but also an instrument in order to protect genetic resources and ecological cycles. Further outputs are the protection of recreation and experience areas to promote "green infrastructure". Moreover, the Lower Green Danube Corridor was established as an initiative of the governments of Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine (signed in 2000), which aims to establish a corridor of about 7.740 km<sup>2</sup> of existing protected areas and 3,000 km<sup>2</sup> of planned protected areas along the nearly 1000 km Danube stretch from the Iron Gate to the Danube Delta.

#### *Environmental protection*

Many parts of the Danube Region will be subject to intensive building activities and construction of transport infrastructure in the future. Experience from Western Europe reveals that such activities usually occur at the expense of arable land and fragmentation of nature and usually at much faster rates than

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population growth. A decoupling of this process would be desirable. Soil sealing due to built-up areas and road construction is an irreversible process. Sealed soils lose their biologic functions, such as water retention, soil fertility, and carbon capture/storage. Solutions for the future include polycentric structures, enhanced development of city centres, improvement of the quality of life in small cities, new settlements only along top public transport lines (TEN), redevelopment of brown field sites, and protection of landscapes and recreational areas.

Despite low population growth rates, land consumption is continuously increasing. Structural changes, increasing personal demands (e.g. living space), flood management and crop production for nutrition and energy are currently putting the resource “soil” under significant pressure, both qualitatively and quantitatively - at national and international level. On the other hand, the availability of land and soil is not unlimited, and soil is a resource that cannot be multiplied and is not renewable. Once “consumed”, soil with all its functions can only be restored with a huge technical and financial effort.

Due to long-term socio-economic changes (demographic change, globalization, urbanization, climate change, scarcity of fossil fuels, increasing mobility constraints, etc.) the demand for high-quality environmental resources is growing. The pressure on relevant environmental resources such as soils used for agriculture and forestry, water, air, landscape and biodiversity will further increase in the future.

#### **Main challenges:**

Despite several successful ecological initiatives carried out within the last decades, the loss of species and living spaces progresses. Steps towards habitat connectivity and building up transnational habitat networks-including cross-border protected areas – are required. Biological migration processes caused by climate change emphasize the importance of ecological corridors like the Danube River to connect different bio-geographic regions and the role of protected areas as stepping stones. Negative impacts on soils due to human activities like air pollution and inappropriate land use jeopardize the ecological functionality of soils. Due to the long duration which soils need to be renewed, damages are often irreversible. Thus, a careful dealing with soils and ecosystems is of significant importance.

Furthermore, wetlands are of particular importance to provide habitats for endangered species, to help even out flood peaks and to reduce flood damage by storing surplus water (see also priority area Water management and flood prevention). However, over the last two centuries in particular, most of the larger floodplain areas have disappeared and only few areas are still in their natural or near-natural state.

The information gap for harmonized land cover information hampers analysis to describe the specificities of regions within the Danube catchment. The territorial diversity of regions is recognized in the territorial Agenda of the EU

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and in the green paper on territorial cohesion (2008). Furthermore this information is necessary to analyze the vulnerability of regions facing climate change impacts and being under risk for natural catastrophes (e.g. flooding). In order to preserve the environment within the Danube Region, changes in the environment cannot be seen as singular spots, but they have to be interpreted within their relevance for the whole process-related environmental chain (e.g. surface runoff). Therefore it is inevitable to put land cover changes into an environmental context.

Pressures from land use and development can be felt at the local level, prompting zoning decisions on a large scale, thus setting the course for far-reaching developments and restricting future options for planning. The deployment of spatial planning instruments is thus an important prerequisite for handling the resource soil in a sustainable way. In order to use soils sustainably by satisfying land user interests in the same way, land use strategies, balancing space consuming demands like food and energy production, living, flood management, air quality protection and waste management are needed.

**Added value:**

Nature and soil protection is an objective of the European Union. Sustainable land use in the Danube Region contributes not only significantly to soil fertility. Furthermore it contributes substantially to flood prevention and the use of soils as carbon storage. An international risk management to face flood events would strengthen ecologic, economic and social security.

**Actions:**

- **The Alps-Carpathian-Corridor** aims to reconstruct and improve the function and permeability of the traditional wildlife corridor within the urban agglomeration Vienna-Bratislava for red deer, lynx, wolfs or bears by means of “traverse support” and green bridges. A cross border project in cooperation between Austria and Slovakia is already in the implementation phase (2010-2012).
- **Danube Parks** could establish networks between administrations of large nature reserves in order to develop and implement transnational strategies for the protection of the Danubic natural heritage. Beside the organizational establishment of the network, measures and projects within the field of “Bottomland riparian forest – management”, “River revitalization”, “Protection of species”, “Monitoring and implementation of Natura 2000” and “Nature tourism” are developed. The implementation phase (2009 – 2012) in the ETC-SEE programme covers three levels of cooperation: 1. Know-how transfer and awareness raising, 2. Elaboration of joint management concepts and action plans and 3. Strategic pilot projects. The specific cooperation between the protected areas strengthens also the competences and position of the administrations in the respective countries.

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- **Developing harmonized land cover information to describe geographic specificities for mitigation of climate change impacts.** Within the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) framework one of the main services that will be operational available is a land monitoring service. A group of European countries has already developed national programmes for high resolution land monitoring. However rather limited information on land resources is available for the Danube Region. Actions should thus focus on the possibilities to generalize harmonized land cover information from national sources in a bottom-up process, while integrating European services in a top down process, to create standardized and INSPIRE compatible information on land cover. Land cover information is the starting point for land monitoring and for developing further applications concerning e.g. land use and soil consumption or general landscape structure changes and alterations in ecosystem functions.
  - **Optimize the use of existing soil resources by balancing land user demands and sustainability aspects for soils.** Based on the existing soil potentials and current and planned land uses, scenarios for regional development should be developed by considering economic, demographic and legal frame conditions. Through the involvement of stakeholders a concept for a sustainable land-use should be developed.
  - **Support the implementation of European air quality protection policies in the Danube Region.** Taking into account the insufficient awareness and actions by authorities, businesses and citizens to combat avoidable pollution, awareness raising campaigns and advocating systematic policies should be firstly implemented. As there are currently still many areas in the Danube Region where citizens have to breathe unhealthy air it is necessary to diminish air pollution levels below the thresholds for health protection set by European legislation.
  - **The European Land and Soil Alliance (ELSA):** This Alliance is represented in six European countries (UK, NL, D, CH, IT, A) and includes more than 100 members. The Länder Lower Austria and Upper Austria are associated members since 2003. After the accession of the first Czech's communes to the European Land and Soil Alliance, further partnerships in the Danube Region should be initiated on communal level and in the educational domains. An interesting cooperation partner could be the already existing working group "Ecology with a focus on soil protection", chaired by Slovakia since 17 years, that operates within the ARGE Donauländer. More specifically, collaboration with the European Land and Soil Alliance particularly regarding awareness raising is targeted.
  - **UrbAN Nature:** Within the ETC cbc-programme AT-SK the project "UrbAN Nature – Development of recovery offers for urban conservation areas" implemented in cooperation between the City of Vienna and the City of Bratislava aims to consider the compatibility of nature protection

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and recovery in border areas of growing urban agglomerations. This project has potential to be further developed in a transnational way within the Danube Region.

- **The MONITOR II:** This project is lead by the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture Austria and deals with communities' resilience to natural disasters, civil protection activities, results diffusion to society, joint early warning and management system implementation tested by table top simulation exercises and field tests. The University of Thessaly is coordinating the project on behalf of Prefecture of Evros, and supports the prefecture scientifically, technically and operationally.
- **Academia Danubiana:** The Academia Danubiana focuses on a scientific and educational network of universities and other institutions of the Danube Region within various disciplines and paradigms in planning and systems design. In the last five years several projects on "Responsible use of soil and land and regional development" have been elaborated related to the three topics, multifunctional soil and land-use, explaining new governance and the learning region concept. The main aim is to disseminate the results and to integrate the 'thematic strategy for soil protection' into an empowering dialogue on a regional basis. The results should be communicated to the political-administrative system and the universities in the Danube Region.

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## **(8) Priority Area: Labour Market**

### **Initial position**

In the last years, the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection has established bilateral cooperation in the field of labour market with several states, which are part of the EU Danube Region (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary). Bilateral administrative agreements provide a formal basis for labour market cooperation projects with the mentioned partner states (an administrative agreement with Hungary is in preparation).

### **Areas of Intervention**

The aim of the bilateral cooperation is the exchange of information and know-how between the labour market institutions and to find a common strategy for specific regional labour market issues, especially in the following areas:

- Modernisation of labour market institutions
- Enhancing the absorption capacity regarding EU structural fund investments
- Working out programmes for target groups facing disadvantages on the labour market (young people, long-term unemployed, older people, women, minorities)
- Preparing the cooperation for the free movement of workers
- Cooperation between the regional social partners

Additionally, in 2009 the implementation of measures combating unemployment was the main priority of labour market projects.

### **Project Examples**

Examples for these bilateral projects are the cross-border Expert's Academies ("EXPAK"), which are established between Austria-Czech Republic, Austria-Slovak Republic, Austria-Hungary and Austria-Slovenia. Similar are the established cooperation projects ("KOOP") with Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia. All these bilateral cooperation projects deal with the special topics of each of the regions and tackles them in a cooperative way, involving institutions of labour market, social partners and target groups, depending on the topic. In the frame of these EXPAKs and KOOPs also pilot measures are developed and tested across the borders.

Further there are cross-border projects from social partners, especially the trade unions, which deal with topics like establishment of cross-border collective contracts and levelling out the situation of employees on both sides of the borders. These social partner projects are established with Hungary, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

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Also there are smaller projects, dealing with a specialized topic like lack of skilled workers in branches like metalworking industry, equal opportunities for women and disadvantaged groups in cross border regions etc.

With other labour market projects in the area there is a close exchange of information, e.g. the project UBI (cross-border employment initiative Vienna-Bratislava).

As the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection in the frame of the Strategy of the Danube Region plans projects with transnational character, involving partners in more than two states, the examples of the existing bilateral projects are not described so detailed. But the experiences made in the bilateral cooperation will form a stable basis for developing transnational labour market projects.

### **Labour market projects in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region**

The topics proposed by the European Commission in its Scoping Paper concentrate on “socio-economic, human & institutional development” in topic 3. The Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection considers this topic being a key topic in the Strategy for the Danube Region.

In the light of the “Europe 2020” strategy, the development of measures promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy, high employment and social inclusion could link the three pillars of the Strategy of the Danube Region.

The establishment and the success of the Strategy for the Danube Region will also depend on what will be the added value of the strategy for the population in the Danube Region regarding social issues, especially job opportunities, education and health.

### **Possible areas of intervention for labour market policy in the framework of the Danube Region Strategy**

Possible areas of intervention for projects concerning labour market in the framework of the Danube Region Strategy can be deduced from the above mentioned topics, which emerged as central in the course of the bilateral cooperation.

The modes of interventions are conceivable in two different layouts or double-staged, respectively:

- 1) Policy orientated large scaled projects, which link thematically as many states of the Danube Region as possible in a guided process, broadening the bilateral approach of the existing cooperation by integrating them into a Danube Region Network. This could be one project with different thematic modules (e.g. target groups of labour market policy as women, youth, long-term unemployed, minorities etc.) or

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different projects with one of these topics each. These projects should coordinate an integrated approach by presenting best practice projects dealing with the covered topic, offer a platform for discussions and help to develop projects on an operational level. To present best practice (and also not-so-best-practice) proved as a very efficient way to open new topics and contrast them with own experiences and circumstances as the operating partners of the projects directly present the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas and of the implementation.

The idea for these policy-orientated projects is to act as “incubators” for project ideas, which work on an operational level directly with the target groups.

- 2) Smaller projects on an operational level, working directly with one of the target groups, e.g. a project developing and implementing training measures for long-time-unemployed, training of the employees of the Public Employment Services concerning the contact with unemployed, developing and implementing measures against youth unemployment etc.

The targets of these in-depth projects could be either derived directly from the policy-orientated projects or be worked out independently. In each case they should report the outcomes in the policy-orientated projects to complete the two-step process.

### **Thematic Leadership**

As Austria has gained in-depth experience with cross-border and transnational labour market cooperation, the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Department Labour Market, could take over the thematic leadership for Labour Market in the framework of the Danube Region Strategy, support the development and coordination of appropriate projects, help to finance them by applying to the European Structural Funds and providing national co-funding.

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## **(9) Priority Area: Cooperation in education and culture for sustainability and competitiveness**

### **Presentation of the issue**

In the last two decades, most countries in the Danube Region have experienced fast economic growth as well as the development of democratic and civil societies. However, rapidly changing information and communication technologies, the imperative need to protect the environment, and demographic changes, such as the ageing population, migration flows and brain drain, represent major challenges. Moreover, the recent economic and financial crisis has hit Europe in an unprecedented way and has amplified existing social and economic challenges. In all countries of the Danube Region unemployment has risen, GDPs fell, and industrial production dropped back. Prognoses show that recovery will need time and that the new jobs created will require higher skilled persons.

In this context, in the countries of the Danube Region as elsewhere, higher, more efficient and targeted investment in quality education and training is crucial for finding innovative ways back to economic growth, sustainable development, competitiveness, and for safeguarding equitable and inclusive societies, also with regard to minorities and minority groups.

The knowledge triangle education-research-innovation builds the basis for sustainable economic prosperity and social inclusion. For the knowledge triangle to be effective, education and training must both provide a broad knowledge and skills base in the population and develop learners' creativity and capacity for innovation.

Thus, as it was also taken into account in relevant contributions submitted by other countries, Austria would like to emphasize the key role of human capital development through education and training for sustainable socio-economic development and proposes to base future development and growth in the Danube Region on the promotion of innovative knowledge societies. Recognising the cultural diversity as well as the rich cultural heritage of the Danube Region, Austria would also like to attach importance to enhanced cultural cooperation, the promotion of intercultural dialogue and the cultural development and cohesion of the Danube Region.

The development of human capital through education, training, science and research is therefore a sine qua non for the Region's long term prosperity and plays a paramount role in paving the way out of the current crisis.

As key challenges, Austria considers the building of capacity for development and implementation of appropriate policy options in order to, in a long run, achieve steady sustainable economic growth based on knowledge and competitive advantages of the Danube Region. It is therefore essential that the

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Strategy is built on human capital as a key prerequisite of better competitiveness in the Region.

Austria believes that policy areas covered by the Strategy and main concrete actions and projects need to be based on the criteria of their contribution to sustainable development, their contribution to enhance social cohesion, mutual understanding and their contribution to the development of innovative knowledge societies in the Danube Region as well as to transnational and regional cultural development.

The main objectives of the Danube Region Strategy should be in line with the European Union's new strategy for jobs and growth ("EU 2020-Strategy"). In March 2010, the Council agreed that the new Strategy will focus on the key areas where action is needed: knowledge and innovation, a more sustainable economy, high employment and social inclusion. Furthermore, one of the five headline targets addresses the improvement of education levels "by aiming to reduce school drop-out rates and by increasing the share of the population having completed tertiary or equivalent education"<sup>2</sup>.

In this context, the Strategic framework for European cooperation ("ET 2020") adopted by the Council in May 2009 is an important tool in order to reach the objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy. This framework, and in particular its four strategic objectives as given below should also be taken into account within the EUSDR:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

Furthermore, issues addressed by the Strategy in general should be in line with the European Agenda for Culture<sup>3</sup> and the Council Work Plan for Culture (2008 – 2010)<sup>4</sup>.

#### **Main challenges:**

Austria welcomes the envisaged cross-sectoral integrated approach to the specific challenges faced by the Region. It is convinced that the Strategy will ultimately only succeed, if topics are covered in a comprehensive and coherent manner and if their interrelationship is duly taken into account. Also in this context, the growing impact of the "knowledge triangle" on the economic and social development, and in particular the role of education and training within the triangle, needs to be fully addressed, as well as the importance of upgrading skills and anticipating skills needs.

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<sup>2</sup> Conclusions of the European Council of 25/26 March 2010 (EUCO 7/19).

<sup>3</sup> Decision of the Council of 16 November 2007, 2007/C 287/01

<sup>4</sup> Decision of the Council, 2008/C 143/06

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In general, the focus should be on the sustainability of measures which goes beyond a short term focus on infrastructure and economic investment, and takes into account the promotion of networks and partnerships between stakeholders from the economic sector, regional/local administration and education and training providers for enhancing the role of human capital development and the implementation of sustainable development strategies. Also in the field of the arts and culture, the Strategy for the Danube Region should focus on sustainable development of cultural cooperation, cultural development and expertise in the cultural field.

Meeting the objectives laid down under the new 'Education and Training 2020' strategic framework and thus contributing to the EU 2020-Strategy are essential goals within EU-cooperation and should also be addressed within the Strategy.

The EU's added value is its capacity of setting common aims and working together in achieving them. Cooperation between Member States and with third countries as well as with social partners and civil society has led to significant progress so far. These experiences should be taken into consideration when developing and implementing a coordinated response to the current and future challenges in the Danube Region.

The future Danube Strategy should also take into account the 2003 Thessaloniki Declaration of the EU Summit under Greek EU Presidency, whereby the EU committed itself to fostering the European perspective of the countries of the Western Balkans through concrete measures and instruments.

In addition, cooperation and synergies with international organizations and institutions such as OECD, Council of Europe (CoE), European Training Foundation (ETF) and UNESCO are essential, also in cooperation efforts with and between SEE countries. The priorities set within the EU policy correspond to the priorities of the OECD and the CoE.

**Danube Region added value:**

In the context of questions related to possibilities of cooperating better, coordinating more and exchanging good practices, Austria considers as an added value and potential positive impact of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region as follows:

- Enhanced cooperation and exchange in the field of education and human capital development, in particular through the establishment of innovative partnerships for enhancing the role of human capital in economic and social development;
- Cooperation and exchange in the field of culture in order to enhance the role of the arts and culture in economic and social development;
- Fostering mobility and exchange of best practice and expertise in the field of the arts and culture;

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- Fostering and acceleration of reform and development processes in education and training;
  - A strengthened role of the “knowledge triangle” within the EU 2020-Strategy: Strengthening Europe’s innovative capacity requires closer interaction between the three sides of the knowledge triangle (education, research and innovation);
  - Functioning regional networks for the implementation of sustainable development strategies/measures will be established including innovative partnerships between stakeholders from the economic sector, regional/local administration and education and training providers;
  - Enhanced emphasis given to human capital and innovation within available EU funding instruments and programmes (Pre-accession, External, Regional and Community Programmes);
  - Closer and coordinated cooperation with non-EU Member States in Europe based on concrete projects and exchange of best-practice in the view of strengthening the European integration process
  - Exchange on demographic developments in the region and their implication on cross-cutting issues of linguistic/cultural diversity and social inclusion.

#### **Strategic actions:**

Following from the above and taking into account also challenges identified by SEE countries of the Region in the context of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital, Austria would like to propose the following actions to be addressed by the Strategy:

- **Enhancement of the role of education and training for the promotion of sustainable development.** Success in reversing unsustainable trends will depend to a large extent on public awareness raising and high-quality education for sustainable development at all levels of education systems. In particular, this could be achieved through environmental education including consumer education aimed at changing consumption patterns, increased focus of training for eco-tourism, health education, digital competence and education for responsible global citizenship.
- **Promotion of entrepreneurship education and creativity.** In terms of enhancing employability, the capacity of the education and training systems to ensure a supply of highly qualified people mastering the requirements of today's working world and contributing to innovation both as employees and entrepreneurs will be decisive, if the countries of the Danube Region are to maintain and improve their competitive position in the global economy.
- **Promotion of intercultural dialogue through education and culture.** Intercultural dialogue is a key tool in addressing some of the most

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important challenges Europe is facing at present. Respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and the ability to deal with the complex reality in our societies are essential in order to foster open and inclusive societies. European citizens, thus, need to be equipped with intercultural competences including communication competences in the mother tongue and in foreign languages. Particular attention should also be given to civic education and the crucial role of civil society within this thematic area.

- **Fostering efficiency, innovation and governance.** In the context of budgetary constraints on the one hand and the increasing role of the human capital factor for innovation, prosperity and sustainable economic and social development on the other hand, fostering efficiency and good governance in education and training is a priority, in particular through the promotion of research on the economics of education, peer learning and capacity building. This action mostly covers the five priorities for government action that the OECD Innovation Strategy is built around. These priorities (Empowering people to innovate; Unleashing innovation in firms; Creating and applying knowledge; Applying innovation to address global and social challenges; Improving the governance of policies for innovation) are necessary to underpin a strategic and broad-based approach to promoting innovation.
- **Developing learning regions and environments.** In order to increase the innovative capacities of societies in the Danube Region, new forms of partnerships and cooperation among key stakeholders in education and training, research, business and public sectors need to be further developed. Innovative partnerships are an imperative for territorial competitiveness, sustainable development and social cohesion as part of successful regional development.
- **Making lifelong learning (LLL) a reality.** Comprehensive LLL strategies and their implementation have been identified as a priority for the development of knowledge societies. Especially in a time of quickly changing qualification requirements and increasing unemployment, it is necessary to put lifelong learning strategies into practice. Making these really effective and increasing their impact for individual learners remains a critical challenge. Regional cooperation on the implementation of LLL strategies needs to be seen also in the context of governance.

#### **Examples of projects, initiatives and frameworks:**

In order to increase the added value of the Strategy it needs to create a stimulating framework for knowledge-based development, particularly with regard to the role of institutions, business environment, regional networking and peer-learning, and the EU integration process. By doing so, however it will be of crucial importance to build upon and make best use of adequate and existing cooperation mechanisms and initiatives already operating in different

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areas and thus to contribute to an integrated approach of the Region, as in particular:

- The Strategy should build on the achievements of the Stability Pact between 1999-2008 in the area of education through its Task Force Education and Youth, in particular in the context of policy-dialogue, capacity building and exchange of best practice. These efforts are today continued by the Regional Cooperation Council as the successor structure of the Stability Pact and in the area of regional cooperation in education by the **RCC Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital**<sup>5</sup> (currently RO Chairmanship, AT and CRO Co-Chairmanship).
- Also, the significant progress made in regional cooperation in SEE through regional networks such as the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries and the **Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)**<sup>6</sup> needs to be taken into consideration. ERI SEE, as a regional platform for cooperation in the field of education and training, supports national reforms in education and training through regional capacity building, transfer of know-how and linking these efforts to European frameworks for education development. The Strategy should also build upon the commitment to regional cooperation in education as agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministers responsible for Education, Science and Research in South Eastern Europe (Istanbul 2007). In this regard, the ERI SEE, as the Memorandum's main implementation framework is currently in a process to be further enhanced and developed into a truly regionally-owned network.
- Within Member States, cooperation within the **Education and Training Work Programme 2010** has led to significant progress being made in support of national education reforms, of common European instruments promoting quality, transparency and mobility. Progress has been made in achieving the five benchmarks adopted under the "Education and Training 2010" work programme, but further progress is necessary. For the period up to 2020 five benchmarks were adopted on the basis of the existing ones (Adult participation in lifelong learning (min. 15%), Low achievers in basic skills (max. 15%), Tertiary level attainment (min. 40%), Early leavers from education and training (max. 10%), Early childhood education (min. 95%).
- The EUSDR should promote cross-border cooperation and mobility of young people and adults by making best use of the EU's **Lifelong Learning Programme**.
- The importance of qualifications in education is being increasingly recognised, also with regard to raising awareness for entrepreneurial skills, which are one of the eight key competences of the **European**

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<sup>5</sup> [www.taskforcehumancapital.info](http://www.taskforcehumancapital.info)

<sup>6</sup> [www.erisee.org](http://www.erisee.org)

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**Reference Framework.** The general goal of encouraging mobility is reflected in the current efforts on the part of the European Commission and the Member States to promote transparency, comparability and the transferability of qualifications. This makes it easier for individuals to be mobile and to contribute their competences to the labour market in an optimal way. The recognition and validation of the results of learning form a key element in this context, regardless of how they were obtained (formally, non-formally or informally). The **European Transparency Instruments**, the European and the National Qualifications Frameworks (EQF, NQF), the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) play a decisive role here. In addition, quality in vocational education is to be ensured and transparency, coherency and mutual trust between individual education systems created by means of the ECVET.

- Based on a Memorandum of Understanding, AT, CZ, SK, HU and SI cooperation within the network “**Central European Cooperation in Education**” (CECE): Cross-border projects, joint conferences, EU co-funded joint projects, meetings of senior officials and expert-workshops provide for coordination, mutual learning and exchange of expertise.
- **ECO NET** – South East European Network of Training Firms for the promotion of Entrepreneurship Education in SEE (implementing organisation: KulturKontakt Austria<sup>7</sup>, funding: Austrian Development Agency; Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture): network of over 1000 training firms in SEE, training firms as a new approach to entrepreneurship education introduced in 10 countries in SEE.
- **Tour.reg** Project: support for the reform of tourism education in SEE (currently: BA, ME, RS, MK, formerly also: BG, RO, HR, AL, UA): improvement of the quality of education in the tourism and hospitality sector and start of an increased focus of training for eco-tourism.
- Recognizing that sharing cultural values, exchanging experiences and patrimony constitutes a unique instrument for maintaining peace, prosperity and harmony in the region, AL, BA, BG, HR, ME, RO, RS, MK and TR are cooperating also in the framework of the **Council of Ministers of Culture of South Eastern Europe** (AT has observer status)<sup>8</sup>. A joint action plan with 14 concrete projects was adopted in April 2009.
- **ET-struct** (EconomicEducational Territorial – *Structure*) is an ETC Central Europe project under the Lead Partnership of the Vienna Board of Education. It responds to the general lack of coherence between the connection of the educational/training system to the leading edge of technology and business practices, being one part of the Lisbon

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<sup>7</sup> [www.kulturkontakt.or.at](http://www.kulturkontakt.or.at)

<sup>8</sup> [www.culturesee.org](http://www.culturesee.org)

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“employment” agenda. The project focuses on (1) brain drain of young and well-educated people, (2) increasing migrant workforce penetrating the labour markets and (3) weak links between secondary/vocational education and changing demands of the labour market.

**EdTWIN (Education Twinning for European Citizenship, Heading for Excellence in the CENTROPE Region)** is implemented under the lead partnership of Vienna (Vienna Board of Education). This project aims (1) to raise awareness for the cultures and the languages of the neighbours, (2) to build up positive attitudes and (3) to set the relevant measures in order to improve the necessary competence standards for opening doors and widening pathways to CENTROPE, a region of excellence in Central Europe.

Both projects **ET-struct** and **EdWIN** could be a basis for further transnational cooperation activities in the field of education on transnational, regional and local level in the Danube Region.

- In order to foster ownership especially from the cultural and artistic sector, some projects building upon the emerging cultural and intellectual actors in the region are necessary. Based on the idea of the European Capital of Culture (cultural life & cultural development) but transforming it to a less institutionalized concept and venue, the Austrian Ministry of European and International Affairs launched in 2008 a new type of cultural cooperation in the Danube Region: **FLOW - Festival of Conversation for Culture and Science**. After Novi Sad in 2008, the next edition is to be held in Chisinau/Moldova from September 16 to 19, 2010. FLOW is an innovative platform for dialogue among young creative protagonists from ten countries of the Danube and Black Sea region, as driving forces able to enhance the role of the arts, culture and science in economic and social development, thus fostering mobility and exchange of best practice and expertise. Starting from FLOW, a range of new future-oriented projects in different fields could be developed and integrated in the EUSDR.

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## **(10) Priority Area: Culture and sustainable tourism**

### **Presentation of the issue:**

Unlike almost no other macro-region, the Danube Region boasts an enormous range of cultural, ethnic and natural diversity. We see an often close coexistence of the heritage of half a dozen historically dominant political powers and of three major world religions. In the past, this cultural heterogeneity was frequently interpreted as a source of political conflict. However, the Danube Region is as much an example of strife, as it is an example of peaceful and highly productive coexistence of different cultural and ethnic groups. This latter tradition needs to be continued to ensure and develop the cultural diversity for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Europe. Rooted in the history of the Danube Region with all its manifestations and wealth of tradition and architecture, the cultural heritage is endangered in numerous parts of the Danube Region.

The cultural diversity and uniqueness as well as the particularities of nature and landscape patterns offer a great chance to further develop the Danube Region as tourist destination. The Danube and its tributaries surrounded by extraordinary cultural heritage and unique landscapes connect cities and regions. In order to evolve this heritage in the most effective way, a coordinated action and cooperation among all Danube countries comprising also non EU-Member States on all levels, including communities, cities and regions could make a significant contribution.

### **Main challenges:**

Cultural heritage and its various manifestations regarding the richness of traditions and buildings are jeopardized in many areas. Thus, there exists an urgent need to save and restore cultural heritage through cooperation, exchange of know-how and experience within the Danube Region. At the same time such an approach would strengthen the regional identities in the Danube Region.

In addition, an important opportunity for the Danube Region with its existing cultural heritage and artistic resources is the exploration and utilization of new technologies from a cultural and artistic point of view. Thus, the great advantages and potential of creative economy can be harnessed to further sustainable economic development in the Danube Region.

The Natural uniqueness and the sensitive environment of the Danube Region comprising numerous national parks and protected areas require a careful "management" of its richness, calling for the development of sustainable forms of tourism. Only a sustainable management and development of tourism, including environmentally-friendly modes of transport, will enable a future exploitation of the enormous touristic potential of the Danube Region.

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Furthermore, the existing cooperation in the area of Danube Tourism between tourist organizations, such as the Working Group of German Danube, the Working Group Danube Austria (ARGE Donau Österreich), the International Danube Tourist Commission and the ETC should be improved. Hence, the establishment towards a common touristic destination needs an adjusted and conceptual procedure within the tourist organizations. In order to make use of the touristic potential and to aim for a touristic development, the respective organizations as well as the cities and regions with its touristic potential along the Danube and its catchment areas have to be cross-linked. The aim is to establish the River Danube as an internationally known tourism destination: "The Danube Region".

#### **Danube Region added value:**

The protection and development of the natural and cultural heritage as basis of regional identity and the existing touristic potential allow the exploitation of potentials far exceeding bilateral cooperation. Hence, on one side the regional competitive position of this macro-region in the area of tourism can be further developed and strengthened, whereas on the other side an essential contribution to the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage will be performed.

#### **Actions:**

- **Establish the Danube Region as important European tourist destination** by developing an environmentally-friendly strategy for the whole of the region (including cities and communities, cultural heritage, nature and economy). Like the Alps and the Mediterranean the Danube Region presents high potential to become an important tourist destination. This strategy could include a close cooperation between the tourist agencies, a joint marketing of the regions and cities and the development of similar projects in different regions. An example of best practice is the cooperation of the Working Group Danube Austria (ARGE Donau Österreich consisting of tourist organisations of Upper Austria, Lower Austria and Vienna) in the marketing of the Austrian Danube Region. Furthermore there is potential to develop networks between the stakeholders in the tourist sectors and the regions and cities in order to develop a label "Danube Region" to open up also the international tourist markets (e.g. in the USA, Asia).
- **Further develop and intensify Activity Tourism.** Establish "Travel chains along the Danube" with attractive stations and tourist itinerary offers for several days (by train, car, ship, bike and hike). There exist already a number of concrete ideas like offers for ship cruises on the river in combination with country-programme-experiences, hiking tourism and natural experiences (e.g. nature- and national parks), bike tourism, tourism in cooperation with rail services (touristic train), city tourism and cultural tourism. For instance the international Danube Bicycle Route

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should be further developed, enlarged and relaunched on the basis of an already existing study about the Bicycle Route from the Source to the Delta, and an international Danube hike way should be developed along the entire Danube. Minimum quality standards for infrastructure, accommodation and for touristic offers and their marketing should be aimed at in the whole Danube Region. Furthermore it would make sense to implement a common and continuous signage/guiding system along the entire Danube and its attractions.

- **Develop sustainable tourism linked to soft mobility** through the creation of sustainable and client-oriented, environmentally-friendly modes of transport to and within the whole Danube Region and its touristic attractions (emphasis on train such as the “Donauuferbahn” between Linz and Vienna, bus, ship and bike, reduction of motorised individual travel). Raise awareness and spread information on sustainable mobility offers incl. marketing measures and integrate them into touristic packages. Implement an efficient sustainable mobility management especially in sensitive and protected areas. This action should be cross-linked with activities under the pillar connectivity.
- **Further develop the navigation system for Danube river cruise ships and private yachts** by securing an uninterrupted and secure navigation with certain standards for ports and other navigation-related infrastructure. This action should be cross-linked with actions under the pillar connectivity. In order to establish travel chains including other means of transport, timetables of train, bus, and ship should be adjusted, taking into consideration also the needs of biking or hiking travellers. The integration of the Danube and the Black Sea into a "synergised" cruise ship destination would establish a link between the EUSDR and the EU Black Sea Synergy.
- **Collecting existing data on cultural activities and establishing a comprehensive data basis giving an overview of cultural activities** in the Danube Region. Such a data basis can significantly contribute to the tourist sector.
- **Promote cultural exchange and exchange in the arts.** Cultural activities (e.g. artistic important films and documentaries referring to the Danube Region which participate on international film competition) can contribute significantly to awareness-raising for a common cultural Danube Region. The promotion of cultural mediation by the means of the establishment of a trans-regional and multi-linguistic services and products could foster the creativity industry.
- **Develop and implement mobility management programmes for environmentally friendly transport and tourism.** With support of the cities and municipalities, businesses, leisure and tourism stakeholders with emphasis on alternative vehicles and electric vehicles should promote cycling and innovative connected public transport services. Furthermore, marketing and awareness rising should be integrated.

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**Flagship projects:**

- **Development of Sustainable Mobility for tourism in selected pilot regions (TRANSDANUBE):** This project includes protected areas in six countries along the Danube (A, HU, HR, RO, SER and SK). TRANSDANUBE aims to identify solutions to mobility challenges through sustainable accessibility and interconnectivity on the Danube and within participating regions incl. train, bus, bike and shipping. Knowledge and awareness shall be raised and existing transnational networks strengthened. *Financing: Project has been submitted to ETC Southeast Europe call.*
- **Improvement of traffic and interconnectivity of train, bus and shipping in the Danube countries (Project “Danube Traffic”)** through the achievement of a political consensus for the adaption of timetables and an adequate fare policy taking into account the needs of bikers (transport of bikes) and hiking tourists. The aim is a traffic and client-friendly Danube Region, allowing for a strategic touristic positioning of the Danube Region featuring soft mobility. *Financing: envisaged by the Austrian Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth, Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology, logistical support by the Austrian Railways ÖBB.*
- **Develop and implement transnational strategies for the conservation of the natural heritage at the Danube River (Project “Danube parks”)** in the participating countries A, BG, HU, SK and RO. *Financing: current ETC Project.*
- **Establishment of the Danube Limes. Launch the necessary preparation in order to nominate the Danube Limes as UNESCO heritage.** The UNESCO heritage would encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage to be of outstanding value to humanity. *Financing: Current ETC project Central Europe.*