

**Preparation of the EU strategy for the Danube region
- Contribution by Hungary**

Introductory remarks

Hungary strongly welcomes the decision of the European Council that was adopted at its meeting held on 17-18 June 2009, by virtue of which the Commission was mandated to work out the EU strategy for the Danube region. It is highly appreciated that the presidency conclusions - in point 35, under the sub-title "Climatic change and sustainable development" – allow for the Danube Region Strategy to be the second EU macro-regional strategy, for which the preparations are to be completed before the end of 2010. The adoption of the strategy by the European Council might become an outstanding achievement of the Hungarian EU-presidency, which is due in the first half of 2011.

Hungary assumes great responsibility for the successful elaboration of the Strategy, and hereby reaffirms its commitment towards playing an active role in working out the strategy. Our dedication is explained by Hungary's central and unique location in the Danube Basin – with a view to the fact that Hungary is the sole country along the Danube with its total territory belonging to the Danube catchment area - as well as by our long-established, extensive and deep political, economic and cultural relations maintained with numerous states of the Danube region. We are convinced that the co-operation envisaged in the strategy is of outstanding importance for the countries, peoples and citizens of the region, as well as it provides them with additional advantages in political, economic and cultural terms as well.

With this document and its appendix, Hungary makes its first contribution to the Strategy, in response to the letter of the Commission dated 22 October 2009. Hungary is aware of the fact that the Commission contacted 14 countries with its letters within the framework of the Strategy, thus the trans-national context is approached in line with this fact.

I.

General remarks

The term of macro-region is construed as a territorial unit covering regions of various countries that carry common cohesive features as a result of their geographical attributes, of the common challenges faced by them as well as of the specific political, economic and cultural inter-relations among them.

Hungary regards the macro-regional strategy (MRS) to be the EU's new and useful political tool in perspective which is meant to further integrate states, citizens and markets in this area - that features a special cohesive force and that incorporates the EU member states and countries outside the EU - as well as to enhance their sustainable development in this manner.

The above-outlined objective of the EU's MRS might be achieved through a complex co-operation of the EU, the EU member states (EUMS) and other stake-holders concerned. The cohesion policy is in focus, therefore, the MRS primarily targets a specific kind of closer co-operation among the participants.

The Danube region relations as well as the bilateral and multilateral co-operation schemes are to be highlighted within the European Territorial Co-operations, providing the opportunity for the local and regional authorities of the member states to work out co-operation schemes at cross-border, trans-national or inter-regional levels within the legal regulatory framework. Hungary is already taking an important role in the Central European and South-East European Trans-National Programme even today. During the period between 2007 and 2013, Budapest is the centre for the authority controlling the latter programme and the (altogether seven) common professional secretariats.

The enhanced cooperation of the countries and other stake-holders belonging to the macro-region might be supported by an EU strategy. This co-operation presumes the implementing activities that serve as a basis thereof. The Commission will probably undertake the role of a facilitator.

The MRS specifies key issues and challenges addressed to the EU and to the member states. In the area of certain policies, the answer to be given aims at developing activities where the EU has an exclusive (e.g. internal market) or shared competence. In the focus of the strategy we can find enhanced co-operation between the member states and the stake-holders, i.e. activities where the EU can only take supportive, supplementary and coordinating measures. In this manner, the methods of open coordination are to be applied at a broad scale, promoting the best practices, e.g. bench-marking or pilot- projects.

The MRS is an EU initiative, therefore, it must be in line with and serve the EU values, fundamental objectives and basic principles as defined in the Treaties. Therefore, the activities and the projects must also cover political, cultural, economic and other fields.

The territorial scope of the MRS demonstrates that the MR is a specific unit. Still, the EU's internal and external dimensions must be separated for legal – and, to a smaller extent, for political – reasons because the EU's competences are also different. While the EU law and the *acquis* determine the framework of co-operation among the member states, co-operation with third countries is subject to contractual relations, for which the EU's enlargement-, neighbourhood- and external policies provide guidelines.

It is clear that any EU MRS must be harmonised with the EU's current legal, institutional and financial frameworks and abilities. Still, it is logical to presume that – in the medium run – the MRS exerts an influence on the EU policies, which may result in surpassing the EU's current legal frameworks through the revision of the legal items or even through initiating law-making. From a legal point of view, the MRS activity thus concentrates – in the short run – on the better enforcement and implementation of the EU law and rules, but in the medium run its impact on law-making is not excluded, either.

The introduction of the macro-regional category into the EU is a logical consequence of the EU enlargement because a mesosphere – taken in spatial terms – seems to be useful between the EU level and the member states.

The territorial scope of the macro-region is to be interpreted primarily from the aspect of territorial cohesion, therefore, its borders are matched to the borders of the given regions rather than to the politically marked-out borders of the states. With regard to this, an EU macro-regional strategy may cover EU member states as well as other countries and their regions. It is our conviction that an EU MRS must concentrate on the internal dimensions, at the same time, the territorial scope has to be applied flexibly in proportion with the target, both in the EU's

internal relations and with respect to the EU and non-EU member states of the region. This is an emphatic aspect in the case of issues implying cross-border security risks (e.g. environment protection, energy supply, migration and food safety) as well as with regard to TEN-T questions. The priority of the EU's internal dimension of the member states is justified by the fact that neither the EU's values and objectives nor its legal and standard norms can be transplanted into third states of the region authentically and effectively if those are not properly respected by the member states.

The MRS carries on the intention aimed at strengthening the Commission's strategic approach: instead of an extremely general CSG (Community Strategic Guideline), it is the MRSs that can bring together national strategic reference frameworks (NSRF).

The MRS is useful if it provides the participants with an added value. In this manner, the MRS has to be based on the participants' real needs and on the real requirements. This statement has methodological consequences: appropriately applying the „bottom-up” approach in addition to involving the member states concerned. The views, ideas and the information gathered from the interested parties are very important but it is unavoidable to previously consider the facts and the data that are typical of the region, as well as to prepare a SWOT analysis. The analytical analysis of the *acquis* might be far-leading in respect of the EU member states of the MRS because, on the one hand, both old and new member states belong to the EU macro-regions and, on the other hand, the EU is in a post-enlargement phase.

II.

1. The Danube region as a macro-region

According to the ICPDR interpretation, the Danube Region (DR) - with its area of 800,000 km² and about 80 million residents is a prominent macro-region of the continent and the EU. Its importance is further increased by the central location. In this manner, the EU carries special responsibility for this macro-region, which was divided during the period of the cold war, and it suffered from external interventions and internal conflicts in the past.

Interpreted in the manner defined by the Commission, the DR consists of countries (and their regions) that are located along the Danube as well as that belong to the Danube Basin. The latter are countries (regions) that belong to Central Europe as well as to South-East Europe. The areas that are "closed from the sea" tackle special common issues, while others have their own seaside areas along the Adriatic Sea or the Black Sea, and this group also has its own characteristic features and problems. These two groups of countries and regions take a kind of supplementary position. The river and the valley connections necessitate the common action. The geographically determined mutual dependence forms the basis of common interests as well as the common and shared responsibility.

Although its east-west extension covers 2000 km, the DR still forms a unity despite this fact, as a result of specific cohesion factors. This macro-region is characterised by economic inequalities as well as by diversity in terms of culture, religion and biology.

The DR incorporates old and new countries, states, nations, fractions of nations and national minorities that possess very rich historical past and cultural heritage. The lessons from the past of co-existence and tolerance are present simultaneously with the traces of political instability, recent

wars, conflicts, atrocities as well as the latent hostile relations that are the undoubted features of the DR. The DR incorporates old and new democracies, and the latter ones have just returned to the market economy.

The DR is not only threatened by political risks but also by hazards in terms of environment and climatic change that are caused partly by natural phenomena (flood, drought) and partly by human activities (water and air pollution). The region has to face the problems of energy safety, food supply-related disturbances, migration, challenges of demographic changes and global crisis. The issues concerning drinking water are also of prime importance because they represent direct threat to the EU and generally to the life of the population in the region. These issues often bring about cross-border implications, what is more, trans-national consequences, which may lead to disputes between/among countries. Hungary, being a low-land country located at the bottom of the Carpathian Basin, is especially exposed to water-related risks and damage. Striking features are the asymmetrical positions of upstream and downstream countries as well as their rights and obligations in the field of water management and shipping, which may lead to unbalances and tension.

The DR covers eight EU and six non-EU states. Four out of the latter states have perspectives of EU accession, moreover, the accession talks are in progress with Croatia. Hungary is open towards the idea that – if needed – other states that have little share in the Danube catchment area should also take part in elaborating the regional strategy in some form. The fifth circle of EU extension offered a priceless opportunity for developing the macro-region. At the same time, the trade barriers - missing public road connections, bridges, traffic restrictions - make it difficult to reach the basic EU objectives and the proper functioning of the single market. The missing links of the transport infrastructure and the different development levels of services provided by financial institutions result in unequal chances for the citizens and for enterprises that are competing with each other, therefore, they increase the economic differences in this segment of the internal market, and they may raise the political tension.

2. The future view and the objectives of the EU's Danube Strategy in Hungary

The Danube valley - as a multi-functional region - is rich in natural and built values. The protection and the sustainable use of resources and values make necessary to work out integrated management and harmonised international co-operation (e.g. the protection of strategic water reserves in terms of quality and quantity, economical use, preservation of biological diversity, protection of ecological networks, flood protection, tourism, cultural heritage, traffic channels). Close co-operation is also required in order to strengthen the common, history- and culture-based regional identity and cohesion.

Uniform and illustrative development concepts, a common information base, a common organisational and representative system that promotes development can help to achieve more objectives in regional development both at an international and domestic level.

When dealing with problems related to natural systems, it becomes necessary to interpret some special areas in a wider sense. The water- and ecological systems have always determined the cultures that are strongly related to the geographical environment, e.g. the objective world of traditional farming (hook management along the rivers Danube, Tisza and Dráva, as well as farming activities and the settlement structures at the Great Plains (Alföld) of Hungary). These anthropogenic interventions into the natural systems exert large impacts, therefore, the development-related issues concerning them should be treated at the level of water catchment. It is public knowledge that water is the most valuable natural treasure of the 21st century, and - unlike mineral treasures - it can be regarded as common property. Hungary has a considerable

amount of water from the rivers flowing into the Carpathian Basin, furthermore, it has underground water reserves that are also significant at a European level. The climatic change affects the quantity of water reserves, and Hungary, and especially the water household (ecosystem) of the Alföld (Great Plains) are very sensitive to changes.

In summary: when defining the relationship between man and nature, water management, regional development, environment protection as well as the development of the transport and communication networks must be in harmony in order to ensure that the ***DANUBE REGION SHOULD BE EUROPE'S SAFE AND VALUE-BASED REGION***, which is the Hungarian future view of Europe's Danube Region Strategy. In order to attain this future view, which effectively enhances the region's attraction force also in itself, the **Danube's integration role must be strengthened and its sustainable development** must be secured together, which is the overall objective of the strategy.

The Hungarian target system of the EU's Danube Strategy is provided by the overall horizontal aspects and strategic priorities, and the implementation is supported by measures that are harmonised with each other.

The horizontal aspects are as follows:

- Strengthening the territorial cohesion of the Danube region
- Moderating the social, economic and environmental consequences of climatic change
- Promoting the unified EU market
- Promoting research and development as well as innovation

The strategic priorities are as follows:

- Strengthening the safety of the Danube region within the country and across the borders
- Sustainable economic development
- Strengthening co-operation and identity in the Danube region

Strengthening the territorial cohesion of the Danube region - as a horizontal aspect - is aimed at terminating and considerably moderating the major differences in terms of development between various river sections as well as between urban and rural areas. In Hungary, the territorial differences in terms of development did not decrease over the past 15 years: among the regions by the Danube, the South Great Plains (Dél-Alföld) - producing the lowest per capita GDP - rated 40 percent of the value of the most developed Central Hungarian region in 2007. Polarisation is even higher at the level of small regions. This further strengthens the migration processes, as a result of which the concentration at some settlements is increasing, while the number of residents is decreasing at other places. A basic challenge to rural development is set by the following aspects: keeping the residents at their settlements as well as establishing for them attractive life space and job opportunities through the well-thought-out, integrated and sustainable utilisation of local resources and by increasing local multiplication. The situation of under-developed regions can also be improved by terminating shadow areas in terms of traffic.

Connection: Commission communication to the Council, to the European Parliament, to the Committee of the Regions as well as to the European Economic and Social Committee, Green Book on Territorial Cohesion: Turning territorial diversity into strength *SEC(2008) 2550* } *Brussels, 6.10.2008 COM(2008) 616*

Moderating the social, economic and environmental impacts of climatic change is one of the biggest challenges these days. The Danube is regarded as one of the ten most polluted rivers in the world, and it is the only European river that is covered in the international report that gives a list of endangered waters. Today, the river is no longer endangered only through burdens imposed by human activities and through economic interests that are from time to time placed in the foreground by squeezing back environmental sustainability, but also through the impacts of climatic change. One of the consequences of the already experienced climatic change can be that - in critical periods - there will be less water in the river beds, e.g. for using water in agriculture, but, at some places, the water reserves used for drinking water supply may also be jeopardised due to the territorial differences. Floods in late winter and in the spring may come earlier and at increasing peaks due to the more intensive melting. It is justified to take an integrated approach towards climatic change and water management – by paying the fullest attention to sustainability - among other things, in the course of planning water catchment management, water supplementation, quality improvement of drinking water, flood and inland water protection, drought protection and irrigation. For this reason, and also for the diversity of the functions of the Danube, it is required to harmonise the interests of the region in terms of water and area usage (drinking water, nature conservation, shipping, tourism, agriculture, forestry, adaptation to the impacts of climatic change etc.).

Connection: Commission Communication of 9 February 2005 "Winning the battle against global climate change" [[COM\(2005\) 35](#) - Official Journal C 125 of 21 May 2005]. (*Winning the battle against global climate change: calling polluting countries and sectors to account, innovations, emission trading, preventive and restorative actions*) Communication from the Commission, of 10 January 2007, entitled: "Limiting Global Climate Change to 2 degrees Celsius - The way ahead for 2020 and beyond" [[COM\(2007\) 2](#) Commission Communication of 9 February 2005]

So far, major steps have been taken in order to terminate the obstacles upon ***creating the unified EU market*** (in physical, technical, taxation, public procurement, financial etc. respects), still, numerous tasks can be defined even today with regard to improving the quality and the quantity of relations, extending networks, enabling cross-border facilities (e.g. roads, bridges, ferries), adopting norms and professional qualifications, copyright and patent protection, extending the rules of free trading etc. The proposals of the "Seamless Europe Programme", which was drawn up in Hungary in 2007, cover the countries neighbouring Hungary along the Danube, thus the proposals can be implemented in co-operation with them.

The primary purpose of ***promoting research+development and innovation*** - as a horizontal aspect - is to make a contribution to the sustainable development of the region, which is intended to be achieved by improving the response capacities worked out for the common challenges as well as through the search for concrete common solutions.

The Danube region, as a transport and communication axis, may considerably contribute to the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises that are susceptible to **innovation**, that deal with production and that seek markets in an environment-friendly manner by relying on local resources, and this must also be promoted with the specific tools of enterprise development (local markets, creative industries etc.). The success of these efforts can be further increased by direct support to research+development and innovation through an overall research programme, as well as through the better utilisation of the opportunities provided by the information economy.

3. Priorities

In addition to the horizontal aspects, priority support must be given (in order to achieve the overall purpose) to:

3.1. Strengthening the safety of the Danube region within the country and across borders:

- *By protecting the values of the natural environment* because the basis for the healthy development of the society and the economy is guaranteed by the natural environment which is functioning in a well-balanced manner, which is burdened with the least possible pollution, and which is used in a sustainable manner. Preventing or moderating the negative impacts of the anthropogenic interventions that jeopardise the region require a complex approach, and it means the correction of various elements and the implementation of activities in a uniform system and in a harmonised manner. This primarily means tasks and obligations upon protecting the biological diversity and preserving the habitats and species of areas marked out as a part of the European Natura 2000 network, as well as with respect to the EU's Water Framework Directive. The fulfilment of the priority is also assisted in a significant manner by the improvement on the conditions of protecting the water reserves and the quality of drinking water, by the prevention of cross-border pollution (primarily water and air contamination) and by the development of waste management.

Connection: Commission Communication of 22 May 2006 "Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 - and beyond - Sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being" [[COM\(2006\) 216](#)]

Communication from the Commission of 21 December 2005 - Thematic Strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources [[COM\(2005\) 670](#)]

Council Directive [92/43/EEC](#) of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. The Directive establishes a European ecological network known as "Natura2000". Amending act(s) Directive [97/62/EC](#): 1997 Acts of Accession of the 10 new Member States. 2004- Regulation (EC) No [1882/2003](#)

- *By providing for the safety of energy supplies*, which is an important task both at macro-regional and local levels today. Therefore, special attention is to be paid towards increasing the energy networks and production capacities and enhancing their flexibility, especially with a view to connect natural gas pipelines and electrical energy networks, by treating them at an equal rank with energy saving, furthermore with a view to the more frequent use of local, renewable energy resources (sun, wind, water, geo-thermic biomass), for which Hungary offers extremely favourable conditions on the side of power sources. Mutual exchange of experience between the operators of nuclear power plants as well as strengthening and improving communication with the population is a key priority task in the Danube region. Cooperation can be improved in several areas (training and supply of experts, research and development, communication with the population etc.) with a view to the already existing infrastructure.

Connection: Commission Communication of 8 February 2006 entitled "An EU Strategy for Bio fuels" [[COM\(2006\) 34](#) final - Official Journal C 67 of 18 March 2006].

Communication from the Commission to the European Council and the European Parliament of 10 January 2007, "An energy policy for Europe" [[COM\(2007\)](#)]

Communication from the Commission to the European parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions -

Second Strategic Energy Review: an EU energy security and solidarity action plan
[\[COM \(2008\) 781\]](#)

- *By improving social and economic security*, which is indispensable, on the one hand, for guaranteeing the security of life and property and, on the other hand, for improving the quality of life. As a result of Hungary's geographical location (location in a basin, its function as an international transit junction etc.) it is of prime importance for us to manage migration, to prevent crime and epidemic as well as disasters (especially flood, internal water and landslide). The co-existence of the majority as well as the traditional, national and ethnic minorities in the region as well as social integration carry special importance from the viewpoint of improving the attraction force of the region.

Connection: Maastricht Treaty, Article 2, Charter of Basic Rights, Copenhagen criteria, EC minority right conventions, IRM (co-operation in the field of crime and migration), EU Culture 2000, Citizens for Europe, Directive [2007/60/EC](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks

- *By improving the production, supply and safety of food*, which has long traditions in Hungary and it should be further developed in harmony with our facilities and on the basis of the ecological and traditional production culture. The growth in the demand on quality products justifies the production of marketable quality products (free from GMO), as well as their local processing and sale through the development of the local markets. All these factors make a contribution to the local employment of the residents and to the strengthening of rural settlements. The global economic crisis, the growing volatility of economic development and poverty increase the general role taken by the Danube region in production and supply. If the prospective unfavourable impacts of climatic change are not followed by the current land use, at certain areas there may be higher soil degradation-related losses and water household extremities. Economic activities can be maintained and the population can be kept in the regions concerned only through close co-operation with the agrarian sector.

Connection: Rural development policy (2007–2013)(European Commission – Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development)
2006/144/EC: Council resolution (20 February 2006) on community strategy directives for rural development (programming period between 2007 and 2013)
Communication of 18 July 2007: “Addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union” [\[COM\(2007\) 414\]](#)
Directive [2006/118/EC](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 [on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration](#)

3. 2. The following must be promoted for the sake of *sustainable economic development*:

- *Improving transport in the Danube region*, which is a key issue with regard to competitiveness, to the development of a uniform market as well as towards ensuring equal chances, which have been defined as a basic economic pillar by the EU. The development of the region on the basis of sustainable mobility can only be targeted if the inter-modal co-operation of water transport and various transportation methods is also guaranteed in addition to modern public-road and railway transportation methods. Terminating the lag that can be experienced in the field of water and port development is carried out as a programme that is given special community priority, in harmony with the European

Water Framework Directive as well as with the protection and the improvement of the condition of riverside eco-systems (Natura2000 areas, nationally protected natural preserves, national ecological network). In this regard, we find it necessary to unconditionally enforce what is set forth in the „Joint Statement” that was worked out upon initiatives by the ICPDR in order to summarise the requirements of sustainable shipping conditions together with the Hungarian standpoint elaborated for it¹, as well as the statements and the recommendations of the Danube Commission providing for the international shipping regulations on the Danube. Improving the accessibility of the region as well as the east-west route within the territory of Hungary by extending the river-crossing possibilities are important both on public roads and by railway in order to terminate shadow areas in transport and traffic. The free movement of goods and people is promoted by the improvement of border-crossing facilities and the equal chances of under-developed zones along the country-border, by the mitigation of the consequences of the past periods and by making the region "seamless". Developing modern logistic centres offering diverse services is a key tool for making use of the economic-geographical potentials along the Danube.

Connection: Green book – TEN-T: A policy review – Towards a better integrated trans-European transport network at the service of the common transport policy COM(2009) 44 (preparing the overall review of the TEN-T guidelines). The European Commission is planning to work out the policy-related methodology by the beginning of 2010, and then to submit - at the end of 2010 - its codification proposals, the review of resolution 884/2004/EC on the TEN-T guidelines and eventually the review of 680/2007/EC TEN-T on the general rules of granting community financial aid.

Decision 884/2004/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 29 April 2004 amending Decision No 1692/96/EC on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network; The resolution covers the development of the shipping opportunities of the Danube as a prioritised transport development project no. 18. Currently, this is the TEN-T project that is going on in all EU countries concerned. Communication from the Commission: Environmental co-operation in the Danube - Black Sea region [[COM \(2001\) 615](#) Convention on co-operation and protection and sustainable use of the Danube River

Directive [2000/60/EC](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, management of inland surface waters *, groundwater *, transitional waters * and coastal waters * in order to prevent and reduce pollution, promote sustainable water use, protect the aquatic environment, improve the status of aquatic ecosystems and mitigate the effects of floods and droughts

Amendments: Decision No [2455/2001/EC](#) Directive [2008/32/EC](#)

¹ „Subject to the Water Framework Directive, to Natura2000 as well as to other European community prescriptions on environment protection and nature conservation, the requirements laid down in the international treaties for shipping route development may become unattainable, and, as a result of this, their review may be considered. (...)

Prior to drawing up the development concepts and passing decisions on various interventions, there is a need for a strategic environmental impact study (and then for an environmental impact study in the case of concrete interventions), for a cost-profit and cost-effectiveness analysis that also covers the natural capital, as well as for drawing up a feasibility study. The economic surveys are especially important in cases where shipping on internal waters is aimed at substituting and replacing public road transportation. The surveys also have to analyse the other methods of transportation.”

- The *sustainable development of tourism* because the whole area along the Danube is rich in diverse live cultural traditions, extensive (protected) values in terms of nature, landscape and cultural history, also including the built, intellectual and cultural heritage. Despite this, Budapest is the only target of the Hungarian Danube section that is competitive also at international scales. Further valuable, but not yet utilised facilities of the region are the following: the riverside stretching along 412 km, 60 percent of which covers natural environment, islands and anabranches rich in habitats, traditional wine-growing areas, colourful cultural traditions and products typical of specific regions, extensive mountain forests, nature-friendly areas, the world-famous big game stock, thermal spas as well as the sections that are, or are scheduled to be a part of the world heritage. For the sake of this, emphasis should be laid on creating the environmental and infrastructure-related conditions of riverside tourism, on working out common tourism product packages built on regional and cultural facilities as well as on elaborating a unified image in terms of tourism.

Connection: Communication from the Commission of 19 October 2007 – Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism [[COM\(2007\) 621](#)]

European Union forest action plan Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament of 15 June 2006 on an EU Forest Action Plan

- *Improving the industrial conditions*, which requires - on the existing industrial bases - the qualitative development of the industrial capacities and the provision of the pertaining production background by increasing the cooperational abilities and level of enterprises, by setting stricter operational conditions for environment-polluting industries as well as by establishing and developing environment-friendly industries. Raising the low economic potential of rural areas lies in the capitalisation of local "knowledge", therefore, a key instrument for rural development is rendering assistance to the economy through local power sources (and by relying on traditions) and by the establishment of a creative economy.

Connection: Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament of 28 January 2004 entitled: "Stimulating technologies for sustainable development: an environmental technologies action plan for the European Union"

[[COM\(2004\) 38](#): Communication of 8 October 2007 from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, entitled: "Small, clean and competitive - A programme to help small and medium-sized enterprises comply with environmental legislation" [[COM\(2007\) 379](#)]

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 11 December 2007 – Proposal for a Community Lisbon Programme 2008–2010 [[COM\(2007\) 804](#): the second phase (2008-2010)]

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Cohesion policy: real economic investments, Brussels, 16.12.2008 COM(2008) 876

The conclusions of the Council in 2007 about the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives, as well as the study of the European Commission made in June 2009 about the relations between culture, cultural diversity, creativity as well as social, scientific and economic development („The Impact of Culture on Creativity”).

3. 3. The following must be supported in order to *boost the Danube identity and co-operation*:

- The *protection of values and heritage*, which means the propagation of common European values like tolerance, democracy and the protection of minorities, the improvement of equal chances, the protection, reconstruction and accessibility of the built intellectual and factual heritage and the promotion of social integration. One of the dominant tasks and challenges facing the Danube Region is to enforce - towards the states and regions participating in the strategy and the neighbourhood of the Danube Region - the values, political norms and criteria adopted by the European Union and represented in the system of international relations. The following play an outstanding role among such values: historical peace between nations and peoples, state of the democracy and the rule of law, tolerance, respect of human and minority rights and the development of good governance. The achievement of these targets can be promoted by multi-layered and versatile co-operation, the sharing of experiences and the promotion of best practices. The integration and the reconciliation in the region increase security and the region's attractiveness, which are important pre-conditions of sustainable development. We encourage better involvement of the countries participating in the strategy into the EU's programmes, thus specifically: „Culture 2000”, „Europe for the Citizens”, „Youth”, as well as student exchange programmes, furthermore the better utilisation of the framework set by the *EC and the UNESCO*, including the better observation of their norms.

During the procedures followed by the EU and in the course of the co-operation carried out by the EU member states within the framework of the Strategy, attention must be paid to the full enforcement of economic freedom rights (free flow of commodities, persons and services), to the termination of the still existing internal market obstacles, to the development of the infrastructure (e.g. re-constructing bridges and roads), as well as to better attention for competition and for equal chances in general terms because this is also a basic right and a need of European citizens and entrepreneurs in the region.

It is our conviction that participation in the Danube Region Strategy promotes the strengthening of economic and political cohesion and coherence in the region, and it also brings the participating non-EU-member states closer to integration-related co-operation. It is of utmost importance that the EU member states taking part in the strategy should support the countries aspiring to EU membership in their integration preparations, in further developing their democratic political structures and the state of the rule of law, furthermore in developing their civil society as well as the freedom of expression and strengthening these values in the whole of the Danube's catchment area. To that end, the Hungarian party already made significant efforts earlier (e.g. the Szeged and Nyíregyháza processes).

Connection: The European Agenda for Culture: cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; culture as a catalyst for creativity; and culture as a key component in international relations, May, 2007

- *Cultural co-operation schemes*, because the partly common historical past as well as the linguistic and cultural “togetherness” imply a cohesive and identity-strengthening potential that can set the foundation for the common future of the region. In this regard, effectiveness must be improved by boosting civilian, religious and church relations as well as through the common programmes, projects and events of cultural institutions.

- *Cooperation schemes in education and training*, because this is the field where one of the most important roles of identity-strengthening and network cooperation – i.e. orienting the generations of the future – can be put into practice. The following are effective tools for achieving this purpose: promoting the exchange of experience and knowledge transfer, extending educational and training programmes to the Danube thematics, expanding networks as well as increasing environmental awareness through common training schemes attached to this topic and creating an environment for education that strengthens creativity („culture-based creativity”). This can be supplemented with the cooperation of cultural and educational institutions in the spirit of life-long learning.

Connection: Lifelong Learning Programme – 2010 call for proposals Education and Training 2010 work programme launched in 2001 and its follow-up, the strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training adopted by the Council in May 2009

- *Cooperation and partnership*, because the Danube region requires an integrated approach and uniform actions (based on a conscious community of interests) despite its international and heterogeneous features. It is important from the viewpoint of the development of a common identity that various parts of everyday life can be connected to the specific features of the region, to the related management history as well as to the common responsibility regarding the condition and the protection of the current natural resources and the built environmental values. In addition to this, the sharp market competition requires new types of competitive edge, most of which are attached to their regional comparative advantage, i.e. they rely on the mobilisation of internal power sources. The enforcement of the territorial economic interest (which is becoming more and more dominant) also requires lasting partnership. For the sake of the proper contents and the effectiveness of national and cross-border cooperation schemes, the cooperation between institutions and local municipalities needs to be strengthened both at local, regional, Euro-regional and international levels, also including the extension of the partner contacts ranging from settlements up to regions. The integrated professional approach and the common regional planning also require cooperation between the planning institutes and the institutions dealing with authority-related tasks because the majority of the problems can only be solved in this manner.

Connection: The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “Member States and Regions delivering the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs through EU cohesion policy, 2007-2013,,” Brussels, 11.12.2007 COM(2007) 798

Budapest, 15 December 2009

Appendix: 1