

Convinced Europeans are the basis for a strong Europe.  
They are to be found in the Danube cities and regions.

## POSITIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF DANUBE CITIES AND REGIONS ON THE EU DANUBE STRATEGY

April 2010

### The Executive Committee of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions

- Refers to the final declaration of the Danube summit in Ulm on 6th May 2009 and in Budapest on 25th February 2010, which stressed the particular significance of the Danube Region for European integration and territorial cooperation.
- Welcomes the declaration of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) of 7th October 2009, which stated that the cities and regions should have a central role in the planning, realisation and further development of the Danube Region Strategy, due to their proximity to the local citizens, and that their participation in later stages is of crucial importance;
- Supports the conclusion in the "Contribution of the federal states Burgenland, Lower Austria, Upper Austria and Vienna to the EU Danube Region Strategy" of 7/12/2009, whereby cooperation between cities and regions for innovation and improved European governance is to be made a priority of the Danube Strategy.
- Welcomes the resolution of the European Parliament of 21st January 2010 on the European Strategy for the Danube Region, which underlines the necessity of incorporating regional and local actors in the preliminary process of developing the Danube Strategy, so that we can find solutions for common challenges and so that the concrete proposals will be realised efficiently.
- Emphasises a close cooperation and regular consultation with the Working Community of Danube Regions (ARGE Donauländer).
- Declares its desire and readiness to participate actively in the development of the EU Danube Strategy, because this is the best way to continue the cooperation and joint projects of the Danube cities and regions successfully, and to make an effective contribution to European integration in the Danube Region.

The common spheres of activity of the cities and regions come from the challenges of the Danube Region, which can only be overcome in a cooperative process between the actors in the Danube Region on a local, regional and national level.

The spheres of action are listed below, alongside project proposals that already play a role in the cooperation between the Danube cities and regions that are members of the Council and which should be incorporated into the Danube Strategy.

## Sustainably improve the environment

- Water is **the** source of life. The Danube with its tributaries is one of the largest water reservoirs in the European Union. The water quality along the whole length of the river is to be improved by 2020 in a massive project through the cooperation of municipal and regional water, sewage and waste disposal companies. This project is also in direct correlation to the realisation of the European Union's Water Framework Directive. Ecological water and sewage projects are also becoming the important economic factor for the cities and regions along the Danube and form the future pillars of a developed nature and culture tourism along the Danube ("Blue Danube in a Green Environment").
- The effects of climate change have also become much more noticeable in the Danube region over the last few years through heavy floods. These catastrophes necessitate the development of a flood early warning system, with the aim of founding an institution operating in all countries (Centre of Flood Prevention and Disaster Management), which is built on a satellite-supported flood early warning system for the Danube region.
- A sustainable energy supply based on renewable technologies (combined heat and power, energetic biomass recycling, fuel cell technology, photovoltaics, geothermal and wind power exploitation) is a central future theme for the Danube countries. In an initial step, energy technology study projects will be developed and set-up at partner colleges and universities in the Danube cities.

## Increase prosperity

- In transforming societies like in most of the Danube countries, strong cities and regions based on guaranteed self-government are a decisive prerequisite for the development of wealth and prosperous economic conditions. The knowledge and exchange of experience in the spheres of action, such as environmental planning, economic development, education and administrative management for members of municipal and regional administrations and parliaments, facilitates the development of joint standards within the EU integration process.  
Symposia, workshops, joint participation in work flows and planning processes give management experts and municipal and regional parliamentarians an overview of administrative management and the legal framework for the Danube partner cities and regions. New developments in e-government will play a central role in this knowledge transfer, particularly against the background of European directives, such as the EU Services Directive
- The development of a generally applicable communication strategy is of huge significance for the still very heterogeneous Danube region. By creating technological infrastructure in selected information centres, setting-up three transnational thematic pilot groups in politics, economy and culture and by holding regular teleconferences, governance and communication systems should be sustainably improved in the Danube Region (Project "Dribe").
- Cooperation between chambers of commerce is key to municipal and regional economic development in the Danube; it facilitates the creation of direct contacts between companies, particularly in the SME sector, and consultation on investment decisions.

- A prosperous economy in the Danube region needs a qualified and self-confident workforce. There is a substantial backlog demand in professional training in the South-East European countries compared to European standards. The dual system of professional training practised in Germany could be the basis for the development of corresponding training projects. One successful example is the training programme that vocational schools from eight Danube cities and Danube countries have developed over the last few years in the field of electro technology / renewable energies.
- The countries along the Danube, particularly the South-East European countries, are experiencing a period of change due to the expansion and integration policy of the EU, which brings social inequality and specific problems of health provision. This is closely connected to the substantial differences in the organisational forms of health insurance, the many migration movements and massive East-West migration, and the demographic developments. According to the latest scientific research, the social structures in South-East Europe are shaped by three processes of change: The transformation processes at the end of Communist rule, massive migration movements with far-reaching social consequences and effects and the EU expansions, which affect the individual South-East European countries in very different ways. Overall, we are dealing with the effects of globalisation on reorganisation and the shifting of welfare and social structures in the Danube countries.

Selected universities along the Danube are tackling the question - within a European research project and in cooperation with partner universities and scientific institutions in the Danube countries - to what extent transnational social networks can develop and, thus, lead to a lasting improvement in healthcare provision in the Danube region and how this would look with regard to national regulations of EU concepts.

### Increase accessibility and appeal

- The Danube region is a transport area of significance for the whole of Europe. For example, the Paris – Budapest Magistrale, the restoration and upgrade of the Danube as a shipping route and for intermodal transport, motorway and bridge structures in Romania and Bulgaria, building up freight and logistics centres, continuation and extending the cycle route via Budapest to the Black Sea: these are all of huge strategic relevance for European transport development. The Council of the Danube Cities and Regions sees itself as a reliable partner for all plans that require a fast and effective connection with its partners in the Danube region.
- The Danube region and its landscape offer an infinite potential for experience. Culture and nature tourism is a future theme of high ecological significance and great economic strength for all cities, regions and countries along the Danube. The Council of the Danube Cities and Regions sees itself as an advocate for the development and organisation of "gentle" Danube tourism combined with innovative ideas for "gentle mobility". The "Gentle Mobility and Tourism (Transdanube)" project is an important component in this context: Optimising the existing transport system, i.e. coordinating the options of train, bus, cycle and shipping traffic and combining these options with the development of tourism attractions, will encourage nature and culture tourism along the Danube.

## Developing the European city on the Danube

- The cities of the Danube Region continue to reflect a living image of European urbanity. A unique city landscape has arisen along the Danube over centuries of European history, in which the idea of a Europe of cities and regions can vividly be perceived and experienced. The structure of the European city manifest in the Danube cities is a decisive prerequisite for successful mastering of the economic, social and cultural challenges of sustainable regional and city development. The variety and mixture of function and design, compactness and concentration of space and public spaces of roads and squares as determining features of this city structure, are the basic elements on which the joint urban development strategy of the Danube cities is built. In the intermunicipal information and experience exchange based on a joint communication platform, the Danube cities are working on a "New European Urbanity in the Danube Region", which is committed to the model of the European city and develops this to face global challenges. Against the background of the obligation of the European city, the Danube cities are focusing in particular on maintaining and preserving their historical city centres. In awareness of the uniqueness of this urban and architectural heritage, the Danube cities are making particular efforts to make these structures useful for modern urban development.

This is why the Danube cities place such weight on the urban integration of the Danube in the spatial development of the city. By defining a joint "Banks of the Danube Strategy", the particularly valuable capital of the river landscape in the city area will be more accessible for residents and visitors, the economy, tourism and culture. Linking the Danube to the surrounding city structure, improving access to the water and how it is experienced as well as developing attractive open spaces on the river for leisure and recreation, as key components of this joint Banks of the Danube planning.

## Encouraging culture and science

- "Culture is the soul of Europe" is a basic tenet of EU culture policy. The Danube region offers a suitable with its enormous diversity and different cultures and ways of life is an exemplary field for experimenting and experience. The Danube has been used as a theme to connect culture and people in different Danube cities for years. The International Danube Festival in Ulm has developed into the outstanding river festival in the Danube region. The International Danube Festival in Romanian Tulcea in the Danube Delta, festivals in Vienna, Budapest and Novi Sad are committed to cultural cooperation along the Danube. The cooperation between creative forces, institutions and festivals in the cities and regions along the Danube, the exchange of theatre cultures, music traditions and dance forms and their actors, leads - according to the principle of "unity in diversity" - to a network of high creative potential with the aim of developing close cooperation and co-productions in different artistic fields. Setting up a European network of creative forces from the Danube Region is a central project of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions within the framework of the EU Danube Strategy.
- The existing scientific network of colleges and universities along the Danube is being expanded through exchange programmes for students and lecturers incorporating the "Danube Rectors Conference".

- The European Danube Academy is the base institution and common platform for cooperation in culture, science and media. It is being expanded in close cooperation with the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) Vienna, Andr assy University Budapest and the Universities of Novi Sad, Belgrade, Ruse and Galati, into a central project within the framework of the EU Danube Strategy: Joint "think tank" of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions

### Strengthen civil society and civil rights

- From a sociological and historical perspective the Danube Region is a European model region for two reasons:  
On the one hand, it is influenced by multi-ethnic cohabitation unique in Europe, but it is also representative of the latent tensions and open conflicts between ethnic groups, of ostracism, expulsion and the genocide of just a few years ago. The debate about ethnically shaped societal structures and their potential for conflict in the Danube Region and their comparative scientific examination is the basis for the discussion of possible solution models. One of the hot topics in this context is the situation and discrimination against the Roma people. A European study and exhibition project will tackle multi-ethnicity and anti-discrimination concepts against the background of the current antiziganism in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.  
On the other hand, the Danube Region is the region with - historically and now - the highest migration movements in Europe. From pre and early history to the Donau Swabian migrants to the consequences of the most recent Balkan wars, the Danube was and is a "river of people" in the truest sense of the word. The European research project - "Decisions, social integrations and health perspectives of staying or repatriation to home communities in persons of forced migration from the Balkans and new migration flows" - can stand at the centre of Danube migration research. The latest studies of migration should be brought together with historical migration flows, but also with current demographic developments to inform proposals for EU policy.
- Equality projects play a central role in the development of civil society structures in the Danube Region. The female actors and representatives of societal change will be presented through portraits of women from all Danube countries within the project "Female Network and Education in the Danube Region". This will showcase gender perspectives and the gender-specific point of view in education across the whole Danube Region.
- "If European identity didn't develop in the Danube region, then where?" This statement by Dr Erhard Busek on 5th July 2008 at the opening of the European Danube Academy in Ulm definitely applies to the meeting of young people from the Danube countries. For example, there have been Tolerance Camps for young Europeans from the Danube countries in Ba ka Topolya (Vojvodina/Serbia) since 2007. There are comparable projects in Vienna and Ulm. These young people meeting projects along the Danube should be continued, expanded and interlinked.
- Strengthening a free and independent media is central to developing civil society and democratic conditions in the Danube Region; this should be encouraged through education and exchange programmes for young journalists and by setting up a Danube media network.

## Governance: European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)

- The cities along the Danube are the motors for the development of a European Danube Strategy. They will have an even greater role in this over the next few years. To this end, an important and competent body was created with the founding of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions last year. This cooperation structure should be consolidated to develop joint spheres of action and projects on the one hand and, on the other, to offer the European Commission a concrete partner institution with legal status. An innovative legal form that the EU has created for such cooperations is suited to this: the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC).

Therefore, as part of the municipal cooperation in the Danube Region, the cities of Ulm, Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest are planning a joint project and development agency in the legal form of a European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation. The purpose of this agency is the development and implementation of joint projects in the spheres of action of the Danube Strategy. Other Danube cities have declared their interest in joining the EGTC.

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