

Zeichenanzahl: 10794

Rede von
Herrn Staatssekretär Dr. Andre Baumann
anlässlich des Participation Day am 17.10.2017
an der Andrassy Universität Budapest

**Beteiligung von Bürgern und Nichtregierungsorganisationen in Baden-
Württemberg**

Gliederung

1. Einleitung
2. Bedeutung von Bürgerbeteiligung für Regierung und Bürgerinnen und Bürger
3. Beispiele: Oberrheinkonferenz, Stuttgart 21,
4. Neue Entwicklungen und Maßnahmen seit 2011
5. Neue positive Beispiele: Südlink, Forum Energiedialog
6. Appell - und Schluss

- Es gilt das gesprochene Wort –

1. Introduction

Professor Meyer,

Professor Bos,

State Councillar Mrs. Dr Erler,

Mr. Joó,

Mr Schicker,

Mr Lütgenau,

Mr Barth,

Mr Pallinger,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Students,

The development of the **Danube Region** is a very important task for the EU.

The participation of citizens and non-governmental organisations is also fundamental to this aspect of European policy. The aim of the **Participation Day** is to **encourage** and **establish civil society** and civic participation.

The **Agenda for Participation** in the Macro-regional Strategies was launched in 2017. This agenda places participation at the heart of all EU regional policies and of macro-regional strategies in particular.

Today, **five working groups** will start a continuous process of coordination and cooperation. This represents a move away from one-off events and projects towards processes that apply to all strategies. These are very important steps and I'm to be I am able to contribute to them.

I would like to thank

the Andrassy University,

the **Baden-Württemberg Foundation** for its financial support,

Priority Area 10 of the EU Danube Region Strategy,

the **Foster Europe Foundation**,

the **Agapedia Foundation**,

and all the other promoters and organisers of this 4th Danube Region Participation Day.

I would also like to express my thanks for the invitation to hold this **keynote speech!** I was delighted to receive this invitation.

I know from my own experience how important the participation of non-governmental organisations and citizens is. Before becoming State Secretary in the Ministry of the Environment I spent around ten years as the **president of NABU Baden-Württemberg**, which is the strongest environmental association

in Baden-Württemberg, the regional section of Birdlife, with over 90,000 members.

I **changed my perspective** when I was appointed State Secretary by Prime Minister Kretschmann in May last year. This means that I have experienced **civic participation** from **two sides**: as an active citizen and member of a non-governmental organisation, on the one hand, and as a government member, on the other hand.

I am convinced that **citizens** and **non-governmental organisations** should **be involved** at an early stage in projects which affect many people. This is the best way of speeding up and improving the quality of such projects and of saving time and money in the process. This is why I encourage civil society, government agencies and enterprises to get involved in transparent dialogue on all levels.

2. Importance of civic participation for government and citizens

Civil society actors play an important role in the EU's Danube Region strategy.

Why is civil society so **incredibly important**?

The participation of citizens is the **basis for the future of a Europe supported by civil society** and for a vibrant democracy.

As the former US President Barack Obama said in his speech in Cairo in 2009: "Elections alone do not make true democracy."

Obama's words also apply to the countries of the Danube Region. Our democracies are strongest and most stable when citizens not only take part in elections but also get involved in public affairs and contribute their thoughts and ideas.

State actors not only need professional expertise. They also need ongoing **dialogue with citizens**. Only then they can benefit from citizens' opinions, ideas and knowledge about what they really need. This is what Obama meant by **democratic responsiveness**.

Governments which make use of citizen input produce **higher quality output** which meets with **greater acceptance** among ordinary people.

At the same time, **citizens** feel that their involvement is valued and appreciated.

3. Some examples and what can be learned from them

I would like to talk about a few **examples from Baden-Württemberg** which I think may be interesting for the future development of the Danube Region.

4. New developments and measures since 2011

In May 2011, Gisela Eler was appointed State Counsellor for Civil Society and Civic Participation. She was made a member of the Baden-Württemberg State Government by Minister President Winfried Kretschmann.

Her task is to expand civic participation systems at state level and to integrate them into administrative processes – as part of the **politics of listening** and social cohesion.

From my own experience as former president of a NGO, I can tell you that my colleague Gisela Eler has really opened up the doors to the civic society and NGOs.

We have had several major successes. It was very important to improve citizens' participation in planning processes was the **reduction of the quorum for referendums** to 20 percent. This involved amending Baden-Württemberg's state constitution.

A **participation platform** was also set up to establish new digital channels on the Internet.

These and many other measures **involve citizens** in planning at an **early stage** and enable compromises to be found which ultimately enhance public acceptance of outcomes.

4.a. Südlink

A good example is Südlink. This is a new electricity link designed to bring the electricity produced in northern Germany, particularly from wind farms, to southern Germany's energy-intensive industry. Even **before the approval procedures had** started a **dialogue** was launched with all the project stakeholders.

District and **local authorities** as well as citizens were informed in full at an **early stage**. The process of dialogue was hosted by the non-profit environmental NGO Deutsche Umwelthilfe on behalf of our Ministry.

The Südlink project now enjoys a **high level of acceptance in Baden-Württemberg**. This shows that our **dialogue-focused approach** is the right way to go.

4.b. Energy dialogue

The second example is the **energy dialogue**.

The aim of this programme is to support and accompany the energy transition in local authorities in Baden-Württemberg.

The increasing use of **renewable energy**, such as wind turbines, is facing growing local resistance.

Most people in Baden-Württemberg support the expansion of wind power in general. But if wind turbines are built close to people's homes there can be local resistance. Wind power yes, but "not in my backyard".

Residents may fear the impact of these structures on their health, the value of their property, the landscape and species conservation.

The **energy dialogue** was launched as a way of calming things down and, at the same time, we wanted to achieve our goals and objectives **hand in hand** with citizens.

One part of the energy dialogue is the communicative and strategic **support** of mayors and local councils in the form of information events, printed material and public relations.

Residents are also sent **information letters** with precise planning details outlining the pros and cons of the project. **Controversial technical issues** are addressed by experts in talks and discussions.

The entire process is supported by **external** and **neutral** professional advisers.

Our intention was and is to design a successful energy transition **with** local people.

In retrospect the energy dialogue has proved to be a **successful platform** for the exchange of information and opinions. In this sense we have achieved our goals. The approach we have taken has enabled us to convince people and to take on board their ideas and suggestions.

5. Appeal – Networking, interest and initiatives for participation, government willingness / conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen,

words alone do not bring us any closer to achieving our aim of supporting civil society. In order to do this we need the courage, planning, optimism and zeal of

committed citizens like you to bring your visions for our society and political development to life.

At the same time, governments and those responsible in the EU have the duty to recognise and take these visions seriously.

I am well aware that the examples from Baden Württemberg may not necessarily be applicable in exactly the same form in other places. Nonetheless, I hope you have the **courage** to take **similar steps**.

The former German President **Richard von Weizsäcker** once said:
"Democracy feeds on argument, on discussion about the right way forward."

Ladies and gentleman, I would like to make an important appeal to you today:

- **Get involved** in discussions. Articulate your arguments and criticisms!
Stand up for your visions!
- **Don't let yourself be discouraged**. We all live within territorial boundaries, but there should be no limits to our ideas.

- My appeal to **those in government** and those who hold responsibility at every level is to **make use of citizens' knowledge** and **participation**. You will be rewarded with better outcomes and greater public acceptance.

In classical antiquity "*societas civilis*" was a synonym for a society of free citizens.

Let us affirm this spirit of freedom in the Danube Region – **now** as part of the Participation Day in the form of dialogues, discussions, workshops and exchanges of views and opinions and **in the long term** by building a strong civil society, a strong "*societas civilis*" in our shared home here in the Danube Region.

Thank you for your kind attention!