

The 6th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and the 4th Danube Participation Day Workshops offered a great opportunity to all participants to broaden their horizons regarding many topics from good governance to ideas of improving the situation of the roma minority. Furthermore, it made possible to meet dozens of representatives of the civil society, members of international organizations and also some governmental actors.

During this event, I had a sense of commitment from all the participants. Many guests have expressed ideas that shows their engagement in voluntary work, organising local campaigns or forming local cooperatives in order to improve the quality of life in their local or regional communities.

I attended the session of the Working Group II: Building Macro-Regional Strategies on local and multi-level governance. After a few lectures, the group concentrated on the challenges (i.e. lack of information and political support), the opportunities (i.e. Cooperation between NGO's and EU institutions) and examples of good practices in this field. It has also set up targets for next year (i.e. presenting pilot projects for governance) in Sofia. In my opinion, the most important conclusion was that governments should be more supportive towards civil society by providing facilities and adequate funding (through municipalities). In addition, they should directly involve citizens in the decision-making process of public policies and raise the awareness of the importance of local initiatives. In the long term, these steps would enhance the citizens quality of life and increase the accountability and transparency of state actors and companies.

I was a member of a young professional group, that organised a workshop for participants of the Participation Day. The title of the workshop was: Participation through Media. I think that it was a fruitful and refreshing discussion and the participants could gain a lot of knowledge about the current state of freedom of press in the Danube Region, the world of Fake News and the importance of social media for NGOs. We will continue our joint work throughout the year to prepare for the next Participation Day in 2018.

I believe, that real change always comes from ideas and programmes initiated by civil society. I am convinced, that the role of the civil society will become even more relevant in the future. And so, our regions will hopefully change for the better.