**Briefing note: Participation and civil society and Ukraine**

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**BACKGROUND**

Ukraine, a non-EU country involved in the EU Danube Strategy process, shares significant part of the Danube-Carpathian Region. In terms of the current administrative-territorial division of Ukraine, the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region is formed by four oblasts (regions) – Odessa Oblast, Chernivetska Oblast, Ivano-Frankivska Oblast and Zakarpatska Oblast – occupying 68,100 sq km with a population of 5.9 million. In terms of a river basin approach and according to the ICPDR methodology, the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region is located in the sub-basins of the Danube Delta, the Prut and the Siret, and the Tisza River.

Theoretically, in Ukraine the EU Strategy for the Danube Region is seen as a tool for the sustainable development of the areas belonging to the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region and a factor able to accelerate Ukraine's move towards the European integration. Nevertheless, since the beginning of the Danube Strategy process, Ukraine has never been an active player demonstrating more or less clear understanding of its own expectations from the EUSDR.

Just from the beginning of the Danube Strategy process the Ukrainian civil society has been doing much to foster Ukraine's involvement in the development and further implementation of the EUSDR. The milestones in the Ukrainian civil society's efforts are:

- The creation of an independent working group on the basis of the Civic Expert Council of the Ukrainian part of the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Committee (CEC) in April 2010 and the development in the cooperation with the governmental working group of the "Ukrainian vision of a future Danube Strategy" submitted to the European Commission at the stage of the EUSDR elaboration.

- The development of a Public Vision of Ukraine's Participation in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (2010) and Action Plan for the UE Strategy for the Danube Region: Analysis and Implementation Perspectives for Ukraine (2012) with financial support from the International Renaissance Foundation.

- In early March 2014 a Ukrainian network of the Danube Civil Society Forum has been established as a horizontal organisation acting with the purpose of joining efforts of Ukrainian CSOs to foster Ukraine's involvement in the implementation of the Danube Strategy, and to ensure efficient cooperation between the Ukrainian civil society and civil

societies of other countries of the Danube River Basin in the framework of the EU Strategy of the Danube Region.

- In February 2013, an EU-funded project "Strengthening Civil Society Involvement in Assisting the Government with the Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region" has been launched with the purpose of making the Ukrainian civil society involvement in the implementation of the EU Danube Strategy (EUSDR) as much active as possible, and promoting dialogue between CSOs and the Ukrainian authorities responsible for the coordination of Ukraine's involvement in the EUSDR implementation. The key component of the project is the development of a Comprehensive Vision of Ukraine's Involvement in the EUSDR Implementation.

- A series of public hearings on the EUSDR and Ukraine has been conducted since 2011, including the 1st national public hearing in Kiev in May 2015.

- The international conference "Paving a Common Future for the Danube Region: Ukraine and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region" (Odessa, 6 October 2015) has become a major event on the EUSDR bringing together the civil society, expert community and the government.

**OBJECTIVE**

Basing on Ukraine's example, to develop recommendations on civil society participation in the EUSDR and building cooperation with the government.

**EXPECTATIONS**

The exchange of experience in civil society involvement in the EUSDR is seen as one of the key outputs from the workshop. Basing on the Ukrainian experience and the discussion between the participants of the workshop, we plan to suggest a model for cooperation between civil society and the government in course of the EUSDR implementation.