



EISENSTADT DECLARATION ON PARTICIPATION IN THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

**ROLLING DOCUMENT ON PARTICIPATION
IN THE DANUBE STRATEGY**



Since the first Danube Participation Day 2014 in Eisenstadt, the Danube Local Actors Platform and the participants of the Danube Participation Day have adopted each year a declaration on the state of play and the challenges of civil society and local actors in the EU Strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR), which were presented to the annual forum of the EUSDR and to relevant stakeholders of the strategy. The declaration serves as a guideline and road map for intensified participation and the work of the Danube Local Actors Platform.

2014 - EISENSTADT DECLARATION ON PARTICIPATION IN THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

The European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) has been elaborated to address common challenges and provide comprehensive development in the Danube Region. The EUSDR as an integrated framework attempts to develop improved solutions by a "concrete process on the ground" that is operated by clear strategic visions, concrete concepts and projects. Thus, "by 2020, all citizens of the Region should enjoy better prospects of higher education, employment and prosperity in their own home area. The Strategy should make the Danube Region a truly 21st century region, secure and confident, and one of the most attractive in Europe" (COM (2010) 715 final, p.3).

In this context, the participants of the 1st Participation Day of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region have discussed opportunities for enhanced participation of local- regional actors and civil society in the EUSDR implementation.

We believe that the commitment of the civil society and local actors are essential for an effective and successful EUSDR. It is essential to support the EUSDR in its strategic visions as well as in its day-to-day implementation.

Convinced that civil society and local actors play a crucial role in a successful EU Strategy for the Danube Region,

The participants of the 1st Participation Day of the EUSDR therefore declare the following:

We believe that the EUSDR needs clear strategic vision and a strong political commitment, which the projects associated with the EUSDR currently do not provide.

In our vision, the EUSDR is a macro-regional strategy that is building and fostering democracy, good governance and the well-being of the citizens it is preserving the natural and cultural heritage and it is developing the rich and diverse cultural and economic activities in the Danube Region.

The EUSDR is a multi-national strategy comprising EU member states as well as (potential) candidate states and countries of the European Neighbourhood. It should reach for the standards of participation, transparency and subsidiarity as laid down in the European Union's primary law.

Building, fostering and devolving democracy as well as applying the principle of subsidiarity is a joint task and responsibility for state and non-state actors at all levels of the EUSDR: local, regional, national and macro-regional in all participating states and the European Union.

The introduction of an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society is a precondition for a modern and strong democratic Danube Region.

These ambitious aims, validated by the principles recognised in the Treaties mentioned above, cannot be reached without innovative and transparent structures, both top-down and bottom-up, supporting the dialogue and consultation of all participating actors, thus enhancing EUSDR visibility and improving the citizen's ownership of the Strategy.

In order to facilitate the full implementation of enhanced participation we call for the implementation of the principles of transparency, subsidiarity and improved governance through the following measures:

- I. Organization of regular hearings by NCPs and PACs at the level of the national platforms of the EUSDR with local communities/municipalities and civil society.
The High Level Group meetings shall reflect the positions formulated at these hearings in close cooperation with local-, state- and non-state actors.
- II. Development of a "EUSDR Road Map to Democracy and Participation" involving all actors at local, regional, national and macro-regional level, from all participating states and the EU in the interim period before the 4th Annual Forum in 2015.
- III. Stronger and equitable involvement of civil society stakeholders in the EUSDR Annual Fora, which represent the main platform for an official and public dialogue, incorporating local actors and civil society as an integral part of the EUSDR. This includes preliminary consultation of local actors in the preparatory work for the Annual Fora.
- IV. Financing of electronic information tools and adequate person-power to share information on EU programmes, projects and funding as well as EUSDR activities in a transparent and timely way within the Civil Society Organisations of the EUSDR.
- V. Financing and Establishment of a Civil Society Platform, which shall provide focussed policy recommendations to all levels of the governance system of the EUSDR and thereby it delivers a simple and reliable mechanism of transparent exchange and structured dialogue with the civil society. Moreover, the Civil Society Platform may serve as the main gateway to gear civil society and Non-Governmental Organisations towards the Priority Areas of the EUSDR, National Contact Points and the European Commission and thereby make them familiar with and integrate into the macro-regional approach.
- VI. Systematic allocation of funds especially by the participating states to build up and maintain the above mentioned participatory structures. This also needs comprehensive coordination and continuous discussions between the participating states.
- VII. A future revision process of the EUSDR must be conducted in an open, transparent, and participative way.

We invite all stakeholders of the EUSDR to start the consultation for the "EUSDR Road Map to Democracy and Participation" forthwith.

We invite all participating states and regions to hold their first national/regional hearings in due time before the 4th Annual Forum of the EUSDR in 2015.

2015 –ULM RESOLUTION ON PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AND PARTICIPATION THROUGH MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN THE DANUBE REGION

Following the first Participation Day and the Eisenstadt Declaration of 25 June 2014, the overall approach for civil society involvement in the EUSDR is twofold:

- Civil society, social partner and local actors involvement in the governance of the EUSDR;
- Strengthening civil society, European citizenship, social partners and civic engagement throughout the Danube Region.

Civil society involvement within the framework of the EUSDR implementation should first and foremost:

- Improve conditions for civic participation and encourage participation at EU, the macro-regional, and the national/regional level;
- Communicate the EUSDR to the citizens;

A potential revision of the EUSDR Action Plan should be used as opportunity to better enshrine the European principles of participation, transparency and subsidiarity by ensuring minimum standards of civil society involvement in the EUSDR.

Within the current governance of the EUSDR, civil society involvement matters especially with regard to multi-level governance and project development (Cf. Council conclusions on the governance of macro-regional strategies of 21 October 2014, 16207/14). Currently, the D-LAP implements three actions of the Action Plan (SEC(2010) 1489 final):

- To improve the trust of citizens and stakeholders in political authorities;
- To establish a Danube Civil Society Forum;
- To ensure sufficient information flow and exchange at all levels.

With the Danube Civil Society Forum already being set up and continuously growing in terms of members and capability, a revision of the existing EUSDR Action Plan should regroup those actions which are already being implemented by PA10 through the D-LAP and its partners. In particular:

Make civil society participation an integrated part of the EUSDR governance, on the basis of

- the Participation Day for local actors and CSOs as an integrated part of each Annual Forum of the EUSDR
- through National Participation Days organised by National Coordinators in cooperation with Priority Area 10 and the DCSF for transparent and regular exchange with non-state EUSDR stakeholders, especially for civil society and local actors, thus developing their respective political culture of participation.
- participative structures and interfaces to organizations of the civil society for each of the Priority Areas of the EUSDR

Ensure the parliamentary dimension of the EUSDR through involvement of the EP as well as national and regional parliaments;

- Create a strong link and exchange of experience with other macro-regional strategies and research on macro-regional strategies;

- Involve European bodies dealing with the topic, e.g. EU Institutions (especially the EESC) or regional institutions in the Danube Region.
- Support capacity building in the Danube Region, in cooperation with the PA10 Danube Capacity Platform (D-CAP), in order to enable institutional memory, capacity to participate on regional, national, macro-regional, and supranational levels (e.g. public consultation processes for policies and programmes), sustain bottom-up processes for self-organization of civil society in a macro-regional context, and project development.

2015 - ULM DECLARATION ON THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE

The refugee crisis in Europe and the Mediterranean represents a defining moment for the European Union and its values of solidarity, human rights, equality and diversity. This is especially true for the Danube Region, which shares a common heritage of conflict, flight, eviction and transformation and is now hit by direct effects of war and persecution in the Middle East, putting even more stress on those countries still reeling from transformation, the economic crisis and natural disasters.

The last months have shown that Civil Society Organizations everywhere in the Danube Region have been the first to intervene and the backbone of activities assisting those fleeing persecution, conflict and war, facilitating their acceptance, transit and integration among our communities. They have shown that it is possible to resist populist tendencies and pressures, to resist reopening old historical rifts, dividing the Danube Region, dividing our populations, and lose the chance to build a shared, peaceful and prosperous Danube Region. In this sense, the refugee crisis could also be an opportunity for the Danube Region to make a step further in its endeavour to become a truly European Region.

European, national and regional institutions should learn from the actual crisis that they must include Civil Society in their governance and decision making process at all levels, in a structured and comprehensive way that will ensure long-term and sustainable solutions, backed by their citizens.

2016- BRATISLAVA DECLARATION ON FUNDING FOR EMPOWERED CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL ACTORS

In the context of the financial, economic, political and social crisis shaking up the foundations of the European Union, the decline of trust in political systems at the European, the national and the local level, hampering a stable and sustainable social and economic development, is evident and its consequences are dramatic.

Civil Society, empowered Local Actors as well as Cities and Regions are key partners for the stabilization and development of the European Project as well as the Danube macro-region. They can make an important difference in finding solutions for common national or transnational challenges, if they are included in the governance at all administrative levels in the Danube Region.

The stronger involvement of Civil Society through consultative networks and platforms has repeatedly been stressed, as in the Commission's report to the European Parliament (COM(2016)805 final)

on the development of macro-regional strategies. While this is of relevance for all member countries of the strategy, some have made significant progress in establishing structural participation, while others are just starting the process. It is therefore essential to further the exchange at all levels on the practical implementation of participative governance.

This has been furthered in the Danube Region by both National Participation Days and the annual EUSDR Danube Participation Day, held back-to-back with the Annual Forum, where Local Actors of the whole Region have an opportunity to meet and exchange, to develop ideas and projects.

However, European programmes and ESI-funds are not suitable for the financing of such smaller projects, events and cooperation, and are therefore unable to enhance the implementation of macro-regional strategies on the ground by a relevant group of its stake-holders- Civil Society and local actors.

We therefore call on the Member Countries of the EUSDR, the respective presidencies, the high level group, the European Commission and the European Parliament:

- to ensure and support the organization of the EUSDR Participation Day as well as of National Participation Days ,
- to consider the importance of small project funding instruments in the starting discussions on the next European cohesion policy, thus showing their willingness to truly engage, in the spirit of the European treaties, in new ways of governance for the benefit of the Danube Region and promote the idea of active citizenship.

ANNEX 1:

DOCUMENTS RELATED TO MACRO REGIONS AND THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

Participants in Eisenstadt took note of the following guiding documents of the EUSDR, laying down general principles such as subsidiarity, territorial and social cohesion and the place-based approach that commit the EUSDR to multi-level and multi-actor involvement:

- Article 11 of the TEU and article 15 of the TFEU defining the transparent dialogue with and participation of civil society as well as articles 300-304 of the TFEU defining the role of the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee;
- Communication from the European Commission on the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 8 December 2010 and the accompanying Commission staff working document “Action Plan”;
- Resolution of the European Parliament ‘Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region’ of 17 February 2011;
- Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘The Danube Region Strategy’ of 31 March 2011;
- Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the ‘Communication from the Commission — European Union Strategy for the Danube Region’ of 16 June 2011;
- Conclusions on the European Union Strategy of the General Affairs Council Meeting of 13 April 2011;
- Conclusions of the European Council of 23/24 June 2011;
- Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region of 8 April 2013;
- Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies of 27 June 2013;
- Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the ‘Report from the Commission concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies’, 16 October 2013;
- Conclusions of the General Affairs Council on added value of macro-regional strategies General Affairs of the Council meeting (14926/13) of 22 October 2013;
- Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the ‘Added value of macro-regional strategies’ of 28 November 2013;
- Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the governance of macro-regional strategies – of 20 May 2014.

Furthermore, participants attested that stakeholders at all levels have issued declarations and position papers endorsing the structural involvement of civil society into the EUSDR such as:

- the Guiding Principles of Civil Society in the Danube Basin¹;
- the Austrian guidelines of participation in its federal politics²;
- the decision of the Council of Ministers of Baden-Württemberg on the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, 26 June 2011,³
- the "Bucharest Statement" of the Meeting of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions and the 7th European Conference of the Danube Cities and Regions,⁴
- the Roadmap for the Integration of Civil Society Organisations in the EUSDR structure, by PA 10.⁵

¹ Guiding Principles of Civil Society in the Danube Basin, adopted at the DCSF key-actors meeting, 29 June 2010, Esterházy Palace, Eisenstadt, Austria

² Standards der Öffentlichkeitsbeteiligung: Praxisleitfaden, Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft (Lebensministerium), Bundeskanzleramt, 2011.

³ Ministerratsbeschluss eines Maßnahmenkatalogs zur Umsetzung der EU-Strategie, Stuttgart, 26. Juni 2011.

⁴ "Bucharest Statement" of the Meeting of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions and 7th European Conference of the Danube Cities and Regions Sunday 27 and Monday 28 of October 2013, Bucharest, Romania.

⁵ Integration of Civil society organisations in the EUSDR structure, Paper presented by PA10 at the Third PAC-NCP Meeting in Brussels, 30-31 January 2013

ANNEX 2:

DOCUMENT ON CIVIL SOCIETY IMPLEMENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE BY RELEVANT EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES

European Council:

- Statement by Herman Van Rompuy President of the European Council, after his meeting with Ukrainian Civil Society representatives
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/127065.pdf
(19.12.2011)
- Council conclusions on promoting young people's access to rights in order to foster their autonomy and participation in civil society
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/146207.pdf
(12.12.2014)

European Parliament (EP):

- Danube region strategy: MEPs urge Member States to act swiftly
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20110216IPR13778/danube-region-strategy-meps-urge-member-states-to-act-swiftly> (17.02.2012)
- Hungary: MEPs hear from civil society, media and the government
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20120206IPR37350/hungary-meps-hear-from-civil-society-media-and-the-government> (13.03.2012)
- Report on local authorities and civil society: Europe's engagement in support of sustainable development
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A7-2013-0296&format=XML&language=EN> (23.09.2013)

European Commission (EC):

- Science, Society and the citizen in Europe:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/pdf/pub_public_engagement/ss_en.pdf (12.12.2000)
- Evaluation of the Civil Society Dialogue at DG Trade
Assessment of Relevance, Effectiveness and Efficiency of CSD Policy and Procedures
http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/october/tradoc_130551.pdf (09.10.2016)
- Civil Society Forum strengthens the Eastern Partnership:
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-09-538_en.htm (17.11.2009)
- Action 2: Active Civil Society:
http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/about-the-europe-for-citizens-programme/overview/action-2-active-civil-society/index_en.htm (13.02.2012)

- COMMISSION DECISION of 25.4.2013 on adopting the 2013 annual work programme for the preparatory action – European Civil Society House, serving as financing decision
http://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/work-programme2013-dgcomm-european-civil-society-house-april2013_en.pdf (25.04.2013)
- EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in Ukraine:
http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu_ukraine/civil_society_roadmap/index_en.htm (25.03.2015)
- Civil Society:
http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/who-does-what/stakeholders/index_en.htm (18.02.2016)
- Civil Society (Transparency):
http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/civil_society/ (01.03.2016)
- Participation in civil society:
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth_strategy/civil_society_en.htm (19.07.2016)
- Civil Society involvement – European Commission
http://ec.europa.eu/health/drugs/civil_society_involvement/index_en.htm (06.11.2016)
- Civil Society: The European Commission outlines new proposals on how to better engage with Civil Society http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/civil-society_en (17.10.2016)

European Committee of the Regions (CoR):

- All levels of government working together to promote the concept of European citizenship and dialogue between civil society and the EU
<http://cor.europa.eu/archive/news/Pages/b5ac2188-3b03-4b2b-9520-49d0542d44ca.aspx> (06.09.2013)
- EU looks to local authorities and civil society to deliver Green Infrastructure
<http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/eu-deliver-green-infrastructure.aspx> (18.06.2014)
- Strengthening dialogue between Civil Society from the Southern Neighbourhood and the EU
<http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/strengthening-dialogue-between-civil-society-from-the-southern-neighbourhood-and-the-eu.aspx> (28.05.2015)

Council of Europe (CoE):

- “Living together: Combining diversity and freedom in 21st century Europe” at the Civil society forum http://www.coe.int/en/web/secretary-general/speeches/-/asset_publisher/gFMvI0SKOUrv/content/-living-together-combining-diversity-and-freedom-in-21st-century-europe-at-the-civil-society-forum (14.11.2011)
- Council of Europe Handbook for Civil Society Organisations
http://www.ehu.lt/files/www_EN_leidinys-small.pdf (2013)
- Reasserting the role of organised civil society as an active player in the field of democracy
http://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/biography/-/asset_publisher/Lb2Hlz5VUrny/content/ngo-participation-in-the-decision-making-process (27.01.2016)

European Economic and Social Committee (EESC):

- The representativeness of European civil society organisations
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.news.10082> (14.02.2006)
- Civil society – Eastern Partnership
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.rex-opinions.15805> (13.05.2009)
- Promoting representative civil societies in the Euromed region: from capacity building to structured dialogue - a critical analysis of the EU's present and future role
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.rex-opinions.19622> (21.09.2011)
- How to involve civil society in financial regulation?
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.eco-opinions.15461> (22.02.2012)
- Crisis – looming threat or once-in-a-life time opportunity for civil society? (Staffan Nilsson's Comment - former EESC President 2010-2013)
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.staffan-nilsson-comment.26831> (19.02.2013)
- Civil Society 2014: Europeans want fairness, cooperation and solidarity
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.press-releases.31309> (21.03.2014)
- CEE Meeting (European Economic and Social Committee: Working meeting on the CEE project 'Making a Success of Europe by Civil Society'
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.news.35647> (08.05.2015)
- Civil Society in the Balkans calls for more inclusion in the accession process- At the 5th Civil Society Western Balkans Forum on 2 and 3 June in Belgrade, participants acknowledged that despite some challenges, the perspective of EU accession will have significant impact on the Western Balkans. This was underlined during four thematic sessions of discussions with representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.press-releases.35989> (04.06.2015)
- Civil society involvement in the implementation of the Post-2015 agenda (Information report) <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.nat-opinions.35521> (17.09.2015)
- Honouring real anti-poverty champions, European Civil Society says time to make stand against poverty in the European Union
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.press-releases.37646> (01.12.2015)
- EU-Ukraine civil society tackles corruption and energy policy issues
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.news.38348> (11.02.2016)
- Civil society shapes the European migration agenda: employment & integration are key priorities <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.press-releases.38888> (06.04.2016)

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):

- Gender Equality & Civil Society: In brief
<http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/44896358.pdf> (1999)
- Cooperation with Civil Society Organizations- Policy and Guidelines
<https://www.oecd.org/derec/afdb/35327533.pdf> (19.09.2001)
- Fighting Corruption- What role for Civil Society? The Experience of the OECD
<https://www.oecd.org/daf/anti-bribery/anti-briberyconvention/19567549.pdf> (2003)
- Civil Society Development: Opportunities and Threats
<https://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/37741533.pdf> (17.11.2006)
- Civil Society Perspectives Strengthening the Poverty Impact of the Paris Declaration: through Gender Equality, Human Rights and Social Exclusion
<http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/38788895.pdf> (2007)
- Together for Better Public Services: Partnering with Citizens and Civil Society
<https://www.oecd.org/gov/togetherforbetterpublicservicespartneringwithcitizensandcivilsociety.htm> (2009)
- The Role of Civil Society in the Fight Against Corruption
<https://www.oecd.org/site/adboecdanti-corruptioninitiative/meetingsandconferences/42877292.pdf> (25.03.2009)
- Civil Society and the OECD
<http://www.oecd.org/pcd/civilsocietyandtheoecd.htm> (November 2012)
- Support to civil society engagement in policy dialogue
https://www.oecd.org/derec/denmark/CSO_indhold_web.pdf (November 2012)
- Civil society empowerment: The CleanGovBiz Initiative supports governments, business and civil society in their efforts to build integrity and fight corruption. The initiative draws together existing instruments, reinforces their implementation, improves co-ordination among relevant players and monitors progress towards integrity
<https://www.oecd.org/cleangovbiz/CivilSocietyEmpowermentDraft.pdf> (April 2013)

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE):

- The Role of Civil Society in Preventing Terrorism
<http://www.osce.org/odihr/25142?download=true> (16.05.2007)
- Civil Society Preparatory Meeting for the OSCE High Level Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding
<http://www.osce.org/odihr/25535?download=true> (06.07.2007)
- Civil Society and Confidence Building- A Discussion Paper
<http://www.osce.org/cio/78205?download=true> 27.05.2011
- RESOLUTION ON STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTIONS IN THE OSCE REGION
<https://www.oscepa.org/meetings/annual-sessions/2013-istanbul-annual-session/2013-istanbul-final-declaration/1663-26> (2013)
- Civil Society Forum Recommendations on Enhancing the Participation of Associations in Public Decision Making
<http://www.osce.org/pc/151631> (17.04.2015)