

Road Map for civil society involvement in the framework of the EUSDR

Promoting transparency and participation through multilevel governance in the Danube Region

Intervention and Resolution of the Civil Society in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region to be adopted by the 2nd Participation Day, Ulm, 28 October 2015

Intervention in view of the Refugee Crisis in Europe and the Mediterranean

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.

The Resolution of the 2nd Participation Day in the EUSDR in Ulm

Following the first Participation Day and the Eisenstadt Declaration of 25 June 2014¹, 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;

¹ See <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/civil-society>

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.

Minimum requirements for civil society participation in a potential revised Action Plan of the EUSDR

Within the current governance of the EUSDR, civil society involvement matters especially with regard to multi-level governance and project development.² Currently, the D-LAP implements three actions of the Action Plan³:

- 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:

1) Make civil society participation and **integrated part of the EUSDR governance**, on the basis of

a) the **Participation Day for local actors and CSOs** as an integrated part of each Annual Forum of the EUSDR

b) through National Hearings in the participating states organised by National Coordinators 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.

c) participative structure and interfaces to 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.

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The Participants of the 2nd Participation Day

Ulm, 28 October 2015

² Cf. Council conclusions on the governance of macro-regional strategies of 21 October 2014, 16207/14

³ SEC(2010) 1489 final