



European Danube Strategy

Bavarian Positions
(Draft)

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In June 2009, the European Council requested the European Commission to present a European Strategy for the Danube Region by the end of 2010. This strategy is to be modelled on the strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and will thus be the Commission's second strategy for a macro-region.

The State of Bavaria is the German gateway to the Danube region and will play an active part in shaping the European Danube Strategy.

Challenges and Opportunities

1. The Danube region is a European cultural region whose common history goes back many centuries. Even in early times, the Danube was already the element that formed the link in the creation of a region characterised by a flourishing trade, cultural and scientific exchange and political interrelationships. The cultural diversity was not only the source of political disputes but also the driving force behind innovation and economic development.
2. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain and the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, the Danube region has ceased by and large to be an area divided. For the Danube region, the enlargement of the EU to encompass today's 27 Member States is a fundamental development enabling the region to unfold its great potential in the best possible way and to advance into an important living space and economic region in Europe
3. 20 years after the opening of the borders to the states and regions of Eastern, Central and South-East Europe and five years after the accession of the new EU Member States, the significance of the Danube as an important axis for the development of the new Europe has clearly increased.
4. Bavaria, which traditionally cultivates very good contacts with the states bordering the Danube, welcomes and supports the development of a European strategy for the entire Danube region as the European Union's second macro-strategy after the strategy for the Baltic Region. European politics are thus focusing more strongly on the Danube region, which is important in terms of European policies.
5. A compilation of the major challenges confronting this macro-region, combined with common activities and projects, provides sensible terms of reference for the

planning and implementation of international projects. It is important in this context to identify challenges specific to this macro-region against the historical, social, geographical and economic background, and to cooperate in purposefully eliminating weaknesses at supranational level.

6. A European strategy for the Danube region can intensify existing cooperation, initiate new projects and perform tasks of coordination in particular in the fields of environmental protection, economic development, a reliable energy supply and transport.
7. The concept of the macro-strategy is a new approach to cooperation in the European Union: without the need for new funding and institutions, it will create a framework for a macro-region on which all those who would like to contribute to an improvement in the living conditions and the locational factors in the Danube region can orient themselves. The strategy is a dynamically developing process and is capable of adapting promptly to changes and developments. The strategy is meant to provide a dynamic, creative, guiding framework that the players in the Danube region can fill with life at their own discretion.

Geographical Scope of Application

8. The states bordering the Danube

In geographical terms, the European Danube Strategy applies to the countries bordering the Danube, namely Germany, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldavia and Ukraine. When it comes to developing the strategy, implementing it, organising projects and communicating with the Commission, the regions bordering the Danube are of the utmost importance because they are, on the one hand, especially affected by the challenges but, on the other hand, also most familiar with the opportunities offered by the Danube region.

Orientation in Terms of Content

9. Concentration on core areas

In terms of content, the European Danube Strategy needs to concentrate on fields that cannot be adequately regulated at the level of the Member States and regions. The topics dealt with also have to be of a kind where cooperation at European level yields genuine added value and the implementation of which could also be supported as part of EU specialist policies. The competences of the Member States, in particular in the field of regional planning, remain unaffected by the Danube Strategy. The aim is to achieve the following objectives in the fields of trade and industry, energy, traffic, the environment and security:

10. An attractive and prosperous region

The aim of a European Danube Strategy must be to make the Danube region attractive and prosperous. The region needs to be given the chance to make use of its common cultural and historical background and the many centuries of traditional trade in this river region, as well as the opportunities provided by the European Single Market. The creative and innovative potential of the macro-region needs to be fostered in the best possible way.

Sub-goals:

- Elimination of obstacles for the Single Market
- Strengthening of SMEs, promotion of entrepreneurial initiative
- Use of the region's entire potential for research and innovation
- Promotion of the macro-region's tourist potential
- Promotion of sustainable agriculture and forestry and strengthening of rural areas
- Strengthening of integrated economic cooperation between Central and South-East Europe and of traditional trade relations
- Strengthening of networks between towns and cities, regions and other important associations

11. A reliable and environmentally friendly energy supply

The reliable supply of energy is of great importance for the European population and for the economic area. A European Danube Strategy helps to ensure the re-

liable supply of energy in the Danube region by means of appropriate projects. The Trans-European Energy Networks – TEN-E projects, already planned for the 2007-2013 period, will have an important part to play in this context. For the 2014-2020 period, consideration needs to be given to the further projects required at European level and the supplementary projects that can be launched at national and regional levels to achieve this goal.

Sub-goals:

- Efficiency and reliability of the energy markets
- Diversification of energy procurement
- Improved access to the energy markets
- Use of domestic energy sources
- Preservation and extension of the energy generation units as well as the cross-border line infrastructure and storage facilities

12. Environmentally friendly organisation of transport and accessibility

One central concern of the European Danube Strategy has to be the future-oriented development of the European river, rail and highway transport networks. Greater traffic safety and improved transport connections make the region more easily accessible and consequently more attractive for inhabitants, tourism and business. Any future-oriented transport-development policy will need to ensure that the various transport carriers are interlinked (intermodality). The different carriers also need to be optimised with regard to the purpose they are meant to fulfil, instead of preference being given to just one carrier (co-modality). This will make it necessary to facilitate the transfer of traffic to the railways and waterways by developing innovative concepts and means of transport, by eliminating the bottlenecks on the Danube in an environmentally sound way and by developing the terminal and port structure. This will also make it possible to relocate enterprises directly on the Danube waterway. Part of the Danube Strategy partnership should be to examine which additional projects of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-V) need to be developed and included in the 2014-20 funding period.

Sub-goals:

- Improvement of external and internal transport connections, in particular the environmentally compatible development of the Danube waterway, including goods terminals and ports, to meet traffic requirements
- Future-oriented development of transport axes
- Improved traffic safety
- Increased intensified cooperation in the field of traffic-related environmental legislation

13. The Danube as a natural environment

As Europe's second longest river, the Danube is a unique, richly varied natural environment. Protecting it is an important obligation of the Danube states. The region must be an attractive place worth living in for its inhabitants and its tourists. To achieve this aim, the natural habitats need to be preserved, along with the animals and plants that belong there. In the environmental field, the further improvement of the water quality, flood control, the preservation of biological diversity and the improvement of the Danube's passability should be central to a European Strategy for the Danube Region. The Water Framework Directive and the Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks specify European requirements from a substantive point of view, so that, in this context, the focus should be on cooperation and coordination in the fulfilment of the requirements.

Sub-goals:

- Preservation of natural landscapes and biological diversity
- Preservation of the Danube as a natural resource and ecological bridge between the Black Forest and the Black Sea
- Coordination of measures for implementing the Water Framework Directive
- Harmonisation of monitoring and warning systems
- Integrated flood control
- Moderating the effects of, and adaptation to, the climate change

14. A safe region

Elementary preconditions for the further development of the Danube states in peace, freedom and economic prosperity are the further strengthening of the rule of law, the fight against corruption and organised crime, practical cooperation in the field of political asylum and the prevention of illegal border crossings in the Danube region.

Sub-goals:

- Fight against cross-border crime
- Support for the Danube states in the further development of structures and improvement of qualifications in the domain of police work, justice and home affairs

15. A culturally diverse and valuable region

Another aim of the strategy for the Danube region is to promote not only the Danube's common cultural background, but also its cultural diversity. Cooperation and contacts between people of different origins forms the basis for creativity and provide the driving force for innovation and economic development. On the one hand, this means respecting cultural differences and, on the other hand, it means fostering one's culture whilst preserving the balance of tradition and modernisation at the same time. A diverse intercultural cultural offer also helps to enhance the attractiveness of a region for the local population and tourists.

Sub-goals:

- International exhibitions and events
- Exchange in the fields of literature, music and art
- Cooperation in research and innovation
- Youth exchanges
- Cooperation in field of the preservation of historical monuments

16. Control by the Member States

To ensure maximum effectiveness and identification with the planned measures, the controlling competence of the Danube Strategy in terms of content and organisation must reside with the participating Member States and regions in observance of the subsidiarity principle. So the Danube Strategy must not include any stipulations that run counter to the decisions of the European Conferences of Ministers or that limit the competences of the Member States. The competence of the Member States and their internal allocation of competences need to be respected. It is the duty of the Member States and regions to define or evaluate and prioritise projects and targets in their own area of responsibility as well as to manage and allocate grants.

17. Coordinating support by the European Commission

The implementation of a strategy in a macro-region comprising several states, many regions and millions of people calls for harmonisation and coordination. The European Commission can provide the participating countries with impulses for topics of European interest and with support in drawing up the strategy. At the implementation phase the Commission acts as a mediator for alliances that are to be newly formed, exercises an advisory functions and can be called upon by the Member States for purposes of coordination.

18. Implementation of the strategy: “European Territorial Cooperation” (ETC) objective

The European Added Value of the Danube Strategy lies in the strengthening of supra-national and supra-regional cooperation. This makes the ETC Cohesion Policy programmes for cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation a key instrument in implementing the goals of the Danube Strategy. Since the emphasis is on supra-national and supra-regional cooperation, they are particularly suitable for achieving the common goals of a macro-region. This, however, does not preclude the fact that the Member States have discretionary powers when it comes to orienting projects funded from other EU grant programmes on the objectives of the Danube Strategy as well.

19. The Danube Region: a unified area as regards EU funding policies

In the current funding period, within the framework of the TTC programmes (INTERREG IV B) the Danube region is divided up into the transnational programme regions of “Central Europe” and “South-East Europe“. In the next European regional policy funding period, a European Danube Strategy must guarantee that the Danube region will not be divided into different development areas so that projects encompassing the entire Danube region as part of “European Territorial Cooperation“ objective can be implemented to a greater extent.

20. Efficient monitoring and reporting

Under the existing reporting procedure on the use of EU grants, the administrative authorities indicate to the Commission if an approved project complies with the objectives of the macro-strategy so as to provide an overview about its implementation. New reporting requirements and further monitoring processes with additional specifications are to be rejected because they would mean additional bureaucratisation of fund management and an extra burden on the administrative authorities.

21. Responsibility for evaluation lies with the Member States

The assessment of the effects and successes of the Danube Strategy should be the responsibility of the participating Member States and regions. The circle of national coordinators already appointed for drawing-up the Danube Strategy is a suitable body for steering the strategy of the Member States and will remain so in future: this body is responsible for evaluation, has sovereign power as regards the interpretation and evaluation of the results as well as the competence for adapting the strategy.

22. Integration of all players

Along with the governmental bodies, players who are familiar with the local challenges are of great importance when it comes to preparing an action plan for the Danube Strategy. Municipalities, chambers of industry and commerce and chambers of trades and handicrafts, other associations and non-governmental organisations need to be involved intensively to do justice to the idea of a bottom-up approach. The long years of close cooperation in the Danube region are reflected in the existence of various cooperations (e.g. European Conference of Danube

Cities and Regions, Danube Summit, Economic Region Danube Cities, Donauhanse etc.), that have demonstrated their value in the past and that need to be networked as part of the future strategy.

23. Use of existing institutions

The existing tried and tested structures should be used for implementing and coordinating the Danube Strategy. This also applies in particular to EU fund management. There is no need here to create parallel structures to the already existing administrative authorities. Most of all, a European Danube Strategy needs to aim at even closer cooperation within the Commission and among the Member States, the Danube regions and Danube towns and cities.

24. Existing earmarking yardsticks are adequate

The Lisbon Strategy and the Gothenburg Strategy are adequate earmarking yardsticks for the EU funding policies; the Danube Strategy must not become yet another yardstick, because this could, on the one hand, lead to conflicts of aims, and, on the other hand, increase the administrative burden and make controlling the programme more complicated. Projects in conformity with the Danube Strategy could nevertheless be earmarked as part of the existing reporting procedure if they provide specific solutions for challenges in the geographical region along the Danube, based on the principles of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategy.

Conformity with Concluded International Agreements

25. The Danube Strategy must be in keeping with agreements already concluded in the Danube region

The international Danube River Protection Convention and the Commission for the Protection of the Danube River established after that provide the framework for ecological cooperation in the Danube region. The Danube Strategy must not impair the Danube River Protection Convention of 1994.

Cooperation with Third Countries

26. Enlargement or neighbourhood policy as the basis

Relations to third countries as part of the Danube Strategy need to be shaped depending on the respective state involved, in accordance with current enlargement or neighbourhood policy. Agreements concluded with third countries need to be reflected in the Danube Strategy.

27. Cooperation in the Danube Strategy does not imply a change in accession modalities for candidates and potential candidates

A European Danube Strategy must not affect the enlargement policy. Cooperation within the scope of the Danube Strategy can neither anticipate nor replace membership in the EU.

28. Ukraine

Cooperation with the Ukraine is, on the one hand, based on the Eastern Partnership and, on the other, on the partnership and cooperation agreement of 1994 or the association agreement that will replace it.

29. Western Balkans

The stabilisation and association agreements are the basis for cooperation between the EU and the states of the Western Balkans as part of a Danube Strategy.