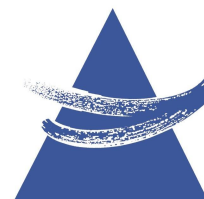




LAND  
OBERÖSTERREICH

Working Community of the  
Danube Regions  
Linz 2009 Upper Austria



Conference of the Regional Leaders  
June 29, 2009

ARBEITSGEMEINSCHAFT  
DONAULÄNDER  
PRACOVNÍ SPOLEČENSTVÍ  
PODUNAJSKÝCH ZEMÍ  
PRACOVNÉ SPOLOČENSTVO  
PODUNAJSKÝCH KRAJÍN  
DUNAMENTI TARTOMÁNYOK  
MUNKAKÖZÖSSÉGE  
RADNA ZAJEDNICA  
PODUNAVSKIH REGIJA  
RADNA ZAJEDNICA  
PODUNAVSKIH ZEMALJA  
COMUNITATEA DE LUCRU  
A STATELOR DUNÁRENE  
РАБОТНА ОБЩНОСТ  
ДУНАВСКИ СТРАНИ  
РАБОЧА СПІВРУЖНІСТЬ  
ПРИДУНАЙСЬКИХ КРАЇН

Linz 2009  
Oberösterreich

# FINAL DECLARATION

Sustainably Shaping the Future of the Danube Region

***The Conference of the Regional Leaders of the Working Community of the Danube Regions***, which is representing about 75 million people from 10 riparian states along the Danube River, on the occasion of the Upper Austrian presidency in the Working Community has held its session in Linz, the European Cultural Capital 2009, to resolve on strategies and cooperations for sustainably shaping the Danube region as well as the most important challenges for this region, for instance the development of a EU strategy for the Danube region by the European Commission, and the effects of the worldwide economic crisis and the climate change on the Danube region.

The year 2009 and the following years are of special importance for the Danube region. The "iron curtain" which has separated Europe over decades fell twenty years ago. Five years ago, the European Union was successfully enlarged towards the east. The cooperation of the Danube Regions enabled an economic growth that resulted in a prosperity by which all Europe has profited. Linz is the European Cultural Capital in the year 2009 and Pécs in the year 2010. The European Cultural Capitals Essen (as well as the Rhine district) and Pécs create a "European culture mile" along the rivers Rhine, Main, and Danube. With Hungary (2011), Slovakia (2016), and Bulgaria (2018) as well as Austria and Romania (2019) five States along the river Danube will have the Presidency of the European Union within the next decade. With Croatia another state of the Danube Region is a candidate for the European Union. Also Serbia as further Danube State is a candidate and has signed a stability agreement with the EU on 4-29-2008.

For the Danube region and its successful integration of states, regions, municipalities, and citizens, there is the chance and the obligation to come out of the new international surroundings stronger than before, by pooling strengths, joint actions, and formulating a policy for the Danube region for the future. Only in this way, the Danube region can again become one of the leading intellectual, economic, and cultural centers of Europe and the world, as it has been before. Together, the regions along the Danube are strong, and with them also Europe. Symbolic for that is the cooperation of the Working Community of the Danube Regions with the European Union, the national states and municipalities, with stakeholders from economy, science, culture, and especially social institutions. This is also shown in the main topic of the Upper Austrian presidency: "Sustainably Shaping the Future of the Danube Region".

### **Sustainability secures future – outline for a successful development in the 21st century**

Sustainability is a statement of environmental, economic, employment, and social policy that is long-term oriented and leading beyond governments' terms of office or national borders. A healthy environment, economic prosperity, and social cohesion should be common goals to ensure a high quality of life for all people in the long term.

Based on the mission statement for a sustainable development of the Danube region that was compiled by the Working Community of the Danube Regions as early as 1996, ***the Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes*** the cooperation within the framework of the Agenda21 process and advocates the initiation of a sustainability strategy that is to be developed within the framework of the EU strategy for the Danube region in the coming years.

### **European Union – peace, security, and prosperity for Europe and the Danube region**

In the course of the enlargement of the European Union from 15 to 27 states, the Danube region has profited during the last years like no other region, and many people were able to enjoy the advantages of the enlargement. The economic recovery secured prosperity and employment

and also made a higher standard of living possible, especially in the new member states of the European Union.

For the future development of Europe and the European Union, the Danube region is of special importance: it is part of the trans-European axis from the North Sea to the Black Sea and connects the European Union with candidate states, potential candidate states, and states that are integrated within the European Neighborhood Policy, especially with the Black Sea region and central Asia. All of them are important strategic partners of the European Union. A greater political and economic stability in the entire area is a point of great interest to all states and regions concerned. The partnership in the Danube region and beyond it has proved already that it is possible to continue the dialogue also in difficult times. This partnership which is marked by mutual dependence, reliability, and faith, has to be enhanced and strengthened because of the intricate international environment.

***The Conference of the Regional Leaders supports*** the work of the cross-party group "Danube Region" within the Committee of the Regions, the results of the Danube Summit that was hosted by Baden-Württemberg on May 6, 2009 in Ulm, the initiatives of the European Parliament, the European Council, and the European Commission to further the integration in the Danube region and to develop a EU strategy for the Danube region, as well as the change of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe into a regional cooperation network (Regional Cooperation Council, RCC) working under the aegis of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECF).

***The Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes*** the announcement of EU Regional Commissioner Danuta Hübner in the Session of the Committee of the Regions on October 8, 2008 in Brussels, to have a EU strategy for the Danube region developed. It welcomes the initiative of Minister Prof. Dr. Reinhart to introduce a respective initiative statement in his function as correspondent in the Committee of the Regions. It also welcomes the decision of the European Council from June 18/19, 2009 in Brussels for a reevaluation of the Danube region on a European level and for a mandate to develop a European strategy for the Danube region with the same attention as is given to the Mediterranean Union and the Baltic Sea Region. Furthermore, it supports the development of a EU strategy for the Danube region within the limits of its competences and capabilities. Corresponding with the European Council, ***the Regional Leaders ask*** the EU Commission to develop the strategy until the end of 2010 and the Hungarian EU presidency in the first half of 2011, and to shape the programs of the new EU funding period from the year 2014 in a way as to meet the special geographic and political requirements and goals of the Danube cooperation. Considering the Lissabon strategy for sustainable development, the EU strategy for the Danube region should contribute to the lasting improvement of the living conditions of the people and to the protection of the Danube region for future generations. Therefore, innovative fields of action in the economic as well as in the ecological area, strong support of small and medium-sized businesses, education, science and research, trans-European traffic and energy connections, the improvement of cross-border security, stronger cultural cooperation of the Danube regions and better cooperation on all levels should be considered to bring more prosperity, security, and peace, to the Danube region, to Europe, and to the neighboring areas.

For enhancing the cooperation in the Danube region and in Europe, ***the Conference of the Regional Leaders advocates*** the rapid admittance of the Republic of Croatia into the European Union and supports the efforts of countries from the Western Balkans to join the European Union.

**Economy – fuel for employment, prosperity, and social security**

The Danube region is an important economic engine within Europe. The current heavy crisis that leaves almost no state excluded offers the chance to emerge from it stronger than before. The programs of the Danube regions for reviving the economy – in addition to the programs on the European and national level as well as the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank – make an important contribution to the economy, especially to the small and medium-sized businesses, to the employment market, sustainable economic growth, and the living quality for the people.

*The Conference of the Regional Leaders confesses to* a social and ecologically sustainable market economy. Economic freedom, achievement, social security, and fair competition are fundamental for our economic and social systems that guarantee employment and prosperity for the people in the Danube region. *The Conference declares* that it is the highest objective to cushion the effects of the financial and economic crisis as much as possible. It confirms its conviction that if the crisis will be seen as a chance for progress, the Danube region will develop positively. To secure jobs, the Conference appeals to the companies, in the sense of Corporate Social Responsibility and considering the demographic changes to use the programs for qualifying their workers, for increasing competitiveness, and for short-time work,.

The current economy situation requires not only short-term support activities but also strategic measures with long-term effects. A crucial starting point therefore is to use synergies and to sound out cooperation potentials. Looking at the international economic interdependences shows that national measures can only have limited impact; so more and more trans-border thinking and acting is necessary. Besides the measures on the international and national level, trans-border regional initiatives offer crucial strategic potential to fight the crisis. Cooperation beyond national borders is the order of the day to master the current economic turmoil.

*The Conference of the Regional Leaders confirms* its conviction that cooperation and an increase in quality also increase the added value along the Danube, and therefore it pursues a common goal: the development of the Danube region into a common economic area.

Main points of focus are the strengthening of the European economic axis of the Danube by pooling strengths and the task to cooperate more and closer with special consideration of the European programs in the sense of a sustainable development – especially in the fields of sustainable technologies and services, tourism, agriculture, and local provisions, but also the expansion of the security of supply and the enhanced cooperation of science and research with the economy.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the economy in the Danube region. To relieve these companies, *the Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes and supports* the suggestion of the expert group led by Dr. Edmund Stoiber to reduce the reporting duty for small businesses.

The economic dynamics in the Danube region are substantiated by the high number of business formations. The cooperation culture and practice of the companies in the Danube region is an excellent basis for an enhancement of the networks beyond the respective borders.

Attributes of the Danube region are also the sound nature, grown culture, special quality of hospitality, touristic infrastructure, and the high quality of agricultural products.

The common cultural heritage, reaching from common traditions and values to well-known historic sights, encouraged the forming of a tourist region with worldwide fame. Every region also profits from the advantages and projects of its neighbors. During the last years, the Danube

developed into an economic, especially tourist area of excellent experiences, even into a culture-political component. Especially since the enlargement of the European Union, the Danube region has been reevaluated. The widespread tourist offerings extend from nearby recreational areas with corresponding sports and leisure opportunities and the booming supply of Danube cruises to the important field of leisure navigation. This successful development of the Danube region presents a great challenge for other businesses in the region – in the commercial field as well as in the field of the development and use of cooperation possibilities.

***The Conference of the Regional Leaders therefore welcomes*** the trans-border cooperations in the Danube region and the successful realization of joint projects. The Danube and the Danube region play an important role particularly with regard to the European Cultural Capitals Linz 2009 and Pécz 2010. The cross-border cooperation especially in common topics such as sustainable tourism, navigation, biking, hiking etc. is of great significance.

In the framework of enhancing the economic integration and demanding a common strategy for the Danube region that presents the foundation for competitiveness and prosperity, ***the Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes*** the existing cross-border cooperations of the chambers and organizations as an example for sustainable economic management.

As a relief for working and trading in a cross-border context, ***the Conference of the Regional Leaders suggests*** the abolition of administrative barriers especially for small and medium-sized businesses. For securing and creating jobs, barriers to economic growth should be abolished and potentials and trans-border education programs enhanced. Particularly in economically difficult times, trans-border projects that help to overcome the economic isolation of border regions and contribute to a higher level of competitiveness and stability have great impact. Growth, especially on the regional level, is of overproportional importance. The Conference supports the liberalization of visa requirements for countries of the Western Balkans.

Therefore, ***the Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes and supports*** trans-border and trans-national projects of economic and social protagonists and advocates the enhancement of the instrument of the EVTZ also for the bilateral cooperation with third states to lead the states, regions, and municipalities of the Danube region outside the European Union to it.

### **Traffic – European waterway Danube secures sustainable mobility and economic growth**

Because of its central location in Europe, the Danube region has always been a turntable between different cultures and economic areas and has been influenced by the European flows of traffic. A modern infrastructure is an indispensable condition for the success of a business location. Traffic ways – trail, street, and Danube – , aviation and telecommunication are the vital lines of our modern society. They connect the Danube region with decisive markets of the future. Mobility is "engine for growth" and basis for economic development, prosperity, and employment.

With regard to a sustainable development of Europe, the Danube region as well as the trans-European inland waterway Rhine-Main-Danube have special significance, being a promising overall-European transport and waterway.

To master the challenges for the future, an integrated, sustainable, and intelligent mobility and traffic concept is required to be able to manage the future flows of traffic with special consideration of the Danube waterway. The inland navigation on the Danube, being an environmentally friendly way of traffic, has to become more important. This should be

accomplished by expansion of the harbors, modernization of the fleet, and securing perennial navigability.

The swift expansion of high performance connections in the railway system is another crucial requirement for future progress of the economic, political, and cultural integration of eastern and western Europe and of the sustainable development of the Danube region.

***The Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes*** the infrastructure projects of the European Commission TEN 17 (axis Paris – Bratislava), TEN 18 (axis Rotterdam – Constanta) and TEN 22 (axis Nuremberg – Constanta), as they present an important contribution to the sustainable development, and asks to complete them quickly.

Only a capable inland navigation with modern technical equipment and highly educated nautical staff is able to manage to expected flows of goods in the east-west traffic. Also the loading economy – logistics experts, haulier, and removers – is challenged. Only those who recognize the advantages of inland navigation as an inexpensive and most importantly environmentally friendly alternative will increasingly use the natural waterway Danube.

#### **Science and research – engines for competitiveness and future viability**

Science and research are the foundation for the continuing story of success: for the continuing creation of jobs, for the maintenance of our competitiveness, for economic growth, and all together for prosperity and social security. Precondition for that are modern universities and highly developed research institutions that are closely networked. Science, research and development, together with the use of innovations in practice, play a crucial role to strengthen innovative energy and competitiveness.

The Danube region has important and capable universities and universities of applied sciences that are the basis for the development towards a trans-border science region. Besides the universities and universities of applied sciences working in the field of research, there are many high-performance research institutes. Another technology characteristic of the Danube regions is a well developed network of technology centers. Central technology players in the whole region are the great number of innovative businesses.

Considering the European Year of Creativity and Innovation, and reinforcing the Lissabon strategy and the Bologna process of the European Union, ***the Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes*** initiatives to strengthen research activities by closer cooperation and networking in the Danube region as well as initiatives in the field of innovation management.

As an important contribution to the network of universities, universities of applied sciences, and research centers, ***the Conference of the Regional Leaders indicates*** the project of the Working Community to establish an online database that offers an overview over the existing institutions in the Danube region, and it invites the institutions to cooperate on this project.

#### **Youth & Education for a sustainable development – key to a society fit for the future**

Knowledge, creativity, motivation, and innovation are crucial for the prosperity of a country and its people. Especially in times of economic insecurity it can be seen more than ever how important optimal education and qualification are for the future. They have to be achieved and maintained in the framework of a global network.

The young generation is our presence and our future – therefore, especially in the context of the current economic crisis and its far reaching effects, focused efforts are necessary to open as many ways as possible for the young people.

To give the young people the opportunity to manage the many challenges of the globalized world successfully, ***the Conference of the Regional Leaders supports*** the expansion of the European dimension of general education, the alleviation of transnational access to education in Europe and especially in the Danube region, the promotion of equal opportunities in all fields of education, the promotion of languages (especially the languages in the Danube region and in the European Union) and an intercultural dimension of teaching, the promotion of cooperation and mobility in the field of education by abolishing mobility barriers, and the promotion of innovation in the field of developing pedagogical practices.

Indicating the UN decade "Education for sustainable development" (2005-2014) as well as the European Year of Creativity and Innovation, ***the Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes and supports*** projects with the purpose to make the UN decade and its goals visible and understandable in the Danube area, as well as projects that focus on sustainability and creativity as an engine for innovation and crucial factor for development of personal, vocational, social, and entrepreneurial competences.

#### **Culture – cultural diversity creates future**

Globalization has strengthened people's longing for home and cultural identity. Culture is the foundation of every society and therefore fundamental for the understanding between peoples and regions. Culture builds identity and becomes more and more the dynamic engine for development and an important location factor.

Characteristic for the Danube region are not only distinguished artists such as Anton Bruckner, Joseph Haydn, Johann Strauß, Franz Léhar, or Elias Canetti, as well as Nobel Prize and Oscar winners, but also many natural jewels and singular landscapes.

***The Conference of the Regional Leaders appreciates*** the traditional cultural and historical ties and advocates the rapid acknowledgement of the Danube Limes as part of the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage. The Danube Limes is part of the Roman Limes around the Mediterranean Sea, reaching from Great Britain to Morocco. ***The Conference welcomes*** the cooperation with the Working Community "Straße der Kaiser und Könige", the oldest international tourism association in the middle of Europe, and suggests a connection of the European Cultural Capitals 2010 – Essen and the Ruhr area, Pécs, and Istanbul – through cultural events and so to build a "European cultural mile" and to make the Danube the focal point of all Europe.

***The Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes and supports*** the European Year of Creativity and Innovation as well as the cultural diversity and the cultural dialogue with the purpose that the citizen in the Danube region – through promoting their talents and innovation skills – contribute to develop the full potential of the Danube region.

To strengthen the innovation skills and the creativity, ***the Conference of the Regional Leaders suggests*** a dialogue between the economy and artists, designers, and other creatives, so as to utilize their creativity and innovation skills for the whole society in the sense of the Cultural Agenda of the European Union.

***The Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes*** the diversity of the media and the quality journalism of the local and regional media in the Danube region which are a guarantee for this

diversity. It is convinced that public funding of a broadcast governed by public law is necessary as an indispensable factor of a free, democratic, and objective opinion making as well as a high quality education and entertainment. Multiculturalism, pluralism, and dialogue will – also after the European Year of the Intercultural Dialogue – be core themes.

To promote cooperation and networking of cultural institutions such as theaters, museums, or music schools as well as media, *the Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes* the initiative of the Working Community to establish an online database that offers an overview over the existing institutions and media in the Danube region, and invites the cultural institutions and media to cooperate on this project.

### **Environment and climate protection**

The worldwide climate change will also have impacts on the Danube region. The fight against climate change is one of the strategic priorities of the Working Community of the Danube Regions. Climate protection, energy efficiency, security of the energy supply, development, and peacekeeping have to be and can be harmonized and open up many diverse new and future-oriented economic potentials.

In accordance with the goals of the European Union, *the Conference of the Regional Leaders resolves on* a partnership for joint action against climate change. The Working Community of the Danube Regions starts initiatives in the field "technologies of the future" and in the development of strategies concerning the UN climate summit in Copenhagen by intensive cooperation and networking. Climate protection is seen as a chance for sustainable development, economic growth, and new future-oriented jobs.

*The Conference of the Regional Leaders points out* that in the field of emissions trading, one-sided climate protection goals in the form of a charge for the already very efficient industry leads to one-sided location costs and to a shift of added value and jobs away from the Danube region; at the same time, they lead to increased emissions in countries with lower standards ("carbon leakage"). The EU emissions trade has to guarantee EU wide harmonized and fair global competition conditions. In the interest of maintaining jobs and added value in the Danube region, the Working Community demands that measures of any kind cannot be introduced at the expense of certain industry branches.

Clean water is a foundation of our life and a crucial economic good of the future. The protection and the security of the future water resources in the Danube region are prior concern of the Working Community of the Danube Regions.

Focal points of cooperation are the Water Framework Directive, the security of the drinking water, expert excursions to water supply facilities and companies of water supply as well as wastewater systems and companies in the field of sewage. By cooperating, the Danube regions also contribute to the protection of the fish stocks in the Danube water system which is especially worthy of protection because of its biodiversity.

*The Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes* the exchange of experiences and know-how and supports innovative projects in the Danube region.

### **Energy security**

Because of the high level of dependence in the field of energy, the security of energy supply is of increasing importance, particularly following the increasing demand and the limited fossil energy sources.



The Danube and its tributaries are an important renewable energy source in Europe and a valuable waterpower potential that contributes to the energy security in Europe and especially in the Danube region. Energy efficiency is one of the most important columns not only of the sustainable energy system but also for the enhancement of energy security. The sectors with the greatest potential of improvement of energy efficiency are the fields of buildings and mobility. To realize existing potentials in all relevant areas, the Working Community of the Danube Regions promotes cooperation. ***The Conference of the Regional Leaders***, indicating the standards in the climate protection and energy package resolved on by the European Union in December 2008, ***welcomes*** therefore events connected with this topic, dialogues about increasing energy efficiency and the amount of renewable energy as well as scientific and economic know-how transfer. ***The Conference particularly advocates*** the modernization of the existing hydroelectric power plants, especially the small ones.

To increase the energy security in the Danube region and in Europe, ***the Conference of the Regional Leaders welcomes*** the construction of new gas pipelines that will contribute to a greater diversity of supply with gas and therefore to a greater energy security.

June 29, 2009 in Linz, Upper Austria