



PARTICIPATION DAY IN THE DANUBE STRATEGY

LOCAL ACTORS AND PARTICIPATION

Village report: Civil Society Village

Date of the event: 25 June 2014, Esterházy Palace, Eisenstadt , Austria

The participants were about 45 NGO and institutions representatives from all countries along the Danube Region. They had prepared for the debate and brought in their diverse experience and expertise. The main issues of the debate and some guiding questions for the discussion were sent in advance to the participants registered for the Village:

Main issues for the debate:

- *Structure for CS Participation in the EUSDR*
- *Supportive National Environments for Participation*
- *Capacity-Building in the CS Sector*

The discussion followed the Guiding questions:

1. What mechanisms for participation and consultation exist at national level linked to programming and implementing the Operational programs and EUSDR?
2. What needs can be identified in terms of capacity building for the efficient application of the Partnership principle?
3. Mechanisms for exchange, networking, coalitions, platforms
4. What kind of technical support is needed towards improving the performance of participation at national, regional - EUSDR, and EU level? Where from?
5. Common objectives, and further steps
6. From your experience: What is the greatest challenge for participation for participation the EUSDR in your field of expertise?

Mechanisms for citizen participation from the experience of the participants in the discussion, which they consider as efficient and appropriate to be transferred and applied to the EUSDR:

- Community mobilization – providing information about the EUSDR possibilities and advantages to local community and stakeholders; People-to-people approach;
- Monitoring mechanisms for the EUSDR implementation: Organization of regular Stakeholders/ public forums at national and international level; Annual National public hearings organized by the NCUs;
- Participatory planning and implementation of EUSDR – establish a mechanism for citizen organization representatives participation in the review and update of the Strategy and the elaboration of the New one;



- Networking/ coalitions (including NGOs, citizens, business) at national and macro-regional level; Design of partnership projects for Cross-border and regional cooperation for exchange of information regarding EUSDR projects and establishment of contacts and new partnerships;
- Communication and participation using the means of media, web, and social networks;
- International groups of experts to work on specific topics (could be grouped by the 3 groups of countries)

Capacity building needs identified by the participants with regard to improving the participation performance in the implementation of the EUSDR:

- Public awareness rising regarding the Strategy
- Expertise for the NGOs in Planning, Analysis and Monitoring of EUSDR implementation;
- Advocacy and policy making
- Advocacy and information campaigns
- EUSDR – branding

Technical assistance needed for the improvement of citizen participation in the EUSDR implementation:

- Linking theory and practice – communication and cooperation between PA 10 and PA 7; involving academia in the work of PA 10, Working group 2
- Legal counselling – free legal services to citizens and organizations on issues linked to EUSDR;
- Support to NGOs for participation in the PA 10 work meetings – not only from the non-EU countries;
- Support for the design of national and international monitoring mechanism models;
- Provision of structured information about EU funding possibilities 2020;
- List/ map of partners active in the EUSDR – could be within the existing platforms.

Conclusions from the work of the Civil Society Village:

Among the basic principles of the Danube River Strategy is to accentuate on the achievement of tangible results as well as on closer cooperation aimed at improved performance of the existing policies and efficient use of the existing resources. This means, the resources of all the sectors and institutions shall be united and all the stakeholders – authorities, businesses, and the civil society – shall be engaged. Such a task requires special attention and resources, however, there is a lot more to be done in this direction.

In order to respond to the expectations and needs of the communities within the Danube region and reflect the EU requirement for application of the Partnership principle, a transparent and inclusive process shall be ensured for the further implementation of the EUSDR and of the new Danube 2020 Program. The respective authorities and the national contact points shall guarantee the information, involvement, and the active participation of all the stakeholders in the implementation of the program priorities and thematic objectives and the coordination and links between them. **Civil**



society participation is crucial for the success of the EUSDR implementation and needs more legitimacy and weight as well as official mechanisms of inclusion. The participants recommend the following:

- There are existing monitoring and participation mechanisms that have proved successful at local, regional and national level – **they need to be further adapted and applied at macro-regional (EUSDR) level** with a view to more transparent and participatory implementation of the EUSDR and better community involvement. **Seed money shall be provided also within the Danube 2020 Program to pilot participatory models** improving the performance of the EUSDR towards better results addressing the communities' needs and expectations.
- National Coordination bodies have to work closer with local stakeholders and communities to improve the performance and foster motivation and involvement in the EUSDR issues and projects. **National hearings, public forums and workshops shall be organized** with regard to improved information and feedback collection;
- **Technical support shall be provided addressing the needs of SCOs** and other stakeholders for capacity building and participation in the EUSDR monitoring and implementation (including PA10 and PA 7 WGs' meetings and events). **The Participation Day shall become an integral part of the EUSDR Annual Fora** to ensure dialogue and cooperation of civil society organizations with the responsible authorities;
- Existing networks and coalitions at national and regional and macro-regional level are a working mechanism for providing information, training and expertise to the citizens in the Danube region municipalities. They shall be further supported and motivated to spread the knowledge and provoke interest and information among the citizens and communities. More space for meeting and exchange will facilitate cooperation and communication among them, too. **Technical support and seed money from Danube 2020 Program and EUSDR shall support citizen initiatives and public discussions organized by networks and platforms at the different levels towards this goal.**

Moderation and report: Iva Taralezhkova, Citizen Participation Forum, Bulgaria