



City of  Vienna

“Vienna Declaration”

Declaration on the 6th European Conference of Danube Cities and Regions

held in Vienna on 24 and 25 September 2012

"START me up - Communication and Mobilisation for the Danube Region Strategy"

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In June last year, the European Council confirmed the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and thus officially launched its implementation process. In an ambitious programme, the structures for eleven Priority Areas (PAs) have been defined with the respective coordinators, and work has started in the form of actions and projects. The first evaluation is due on 28 and 29 November 2012, at the 1st Annual Forum on the EUSDR in Regensburg.

As a political network for cities and regions, the Council of Danube Cities and Regions takes an active part in the implementation process, as does the Working Group of Danube Countries (ARGE Donauländer). For instance, the Council is represented in the Steering Group for PA 10 (“To step up institutional capacity and cooperation”), which is coordinated by Vienna and Slovenia.

Cities and Regions are also actively involved in a number of cross-border and transnational projects, effectively fulfilling their assigned role of taking concrete action to improve living conditions for the population. Cities and regions play a central role in the implementation of the EU Danube Region Strategy and are known as stability factors in the Danube Region.

Well-functioning administrations are an important basis for cooperation in the Danube Region, and for the efficient implementation of actual measures at local level. Exchanging

expert knowledge and developing transnational, practice-oriented training programmes for administrative staff can be a sustainable and effective contribution to reaching this objective. The Council of Danube Cities and Regions supports initiatives like the project “Training of Danube Managers”, which is currently being discussed and developed.

The Council of Danube Cities and Regions emphasises that the implementation of the EU Danube Region Strategy will only turn out to be a success if it succeeds in mobilising not only the different levels of administration and politics, but also the business community, society, media, and all people in the Danube Region in general.

Therefore the Council of Danube Cities and Regions asserts that it is particularly urgent and critical to promote broad public awareness of the EU Danube Region Strategy, and to ensure it raises interest and curiosity on the part of the citizens, institutions and businesses. Too few people currently know about the Strategy’s objectives and chances.

The Vienna Conference under the motto “**START ME UP – Communication and Mobilisation for the Danube Region Strategy**”, held by the City of Vienna with the Council of Danube Cities and Regions on 24 and 25 September 2012, addresses communication strategies and mobilisation measures that can turn the EU Danube Region Strategy into an initiative with broad public support. The suggestions, exchange of ideas, and findings of the Conference are meant to stimulate activities by the Cities and Regions, but also by other stakeholders.

We also welcome Vienna’s initiative of a “Danube Dialogue” bringing together various media, universities and cultural platforms from the entire Danube Region in Vienna on 21 September 2012 in order to establish a cooperation platform for the targeted communication of the EU Danube Region Strategy.

The Council of Danube Cities and Regions believes that the envisaged broad communication and mobilisation process for the EU Danube Region Strategy also requires a sustainable initiative by the European Commission, which should be developed in cooperation with the relevant parties involved. After all, the most effective way of helping citizens identify with the Danube initiative, the Danube region itself, and Europe as a whole is by implementing projects that make a visible, positive difference in their daily lives and promote an optimistic growth perspective.

The local and regional levels play a central role in this context.

The key purpose of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region is to bring sustainable peace, democratic structures, legal certainty, a clean environment, prosperity, education and social equity to the citizens living along the Danube.

The Council of Danube Cities and Regions confirms its general willingness to support the EU Commission, but also the national governments – as provided for in the EUSDR Action Plan – as a strategic partner and platform for the cities and regions of the Danube region.

To this end, we intend to further intensify the cooperation with ARGE Donauländer that started in 2009, as well as our cooperation with other relevant networks. This intention is in line with the fundamental principle of the EU Danube Region Strategy: creating added value for the development of this important European region by means of targeted cooperation in specific areas.