



WORKING COMMUNITY OF THE DANUBE REGIONS (*ARGE DONAULAENDER*)

Working Session

16 October 2018 (10.40 am to 12.30 pm)

Kulturfabrik Hainburg

Kulturplatz 1, 2410 Hainburg, Austria

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 DUNĂRENE
РАБОТНА ОБШНОСТ
ДУНАВСКИ СТРАНИ
РОБОЧА СПІВРУЖНІСТЬ
ПРИДУНАЙСЬКИХ КРАЇН

MINUTES

Agenda:

- 1) Welcome and presentation of the agenda
- 2) Reports from the working groups
- 3) Further development of new and existing working groups
- 4) Cooperation with other institutions
- 5) Institutional matters and bylaws of the *ARGE Donauländer*
- 6) Report on events since the kick-off event in March 2018 and up-coming events
- 7) Public Relations

Participants:

Tino BLONDIAU, Karl REINER, Christian STEINER, Thomas J. RESCH,
Otto SCHWETZ, Vladimír HOLČÍK, Erwin SZLEZAK, Karl GRAMMANITSCH,
Georg STEINER, Simon ORTNER, Daniela-STAMPFL-WALCH, Kristína VANDOVÁ,
Elke LEDL, Julia AUER, Christina DIEGELMANN, Martina JAUCK, Christian POPP,
Adolf SCHARTNER, Tatiana MIKUŠOVÁ, Edib URUČI, Georg KRAUCHENBERG,
Gerlinde BRISTELA, Andrea ÜBERBACHER, Andreas VOIGT, Regina
STIERSCHNEIDER, Franz PATZL, Alena SIRKA-BRED, Ulrike PICHLER,
Katka KREJOVA

Item 1 – Welcome and presentation of the agenda

Daniela Stampfl-Walch, General Secretariat of the *ARGE Donaulaender*, Federal Province of Lower Austria, welcomes the participants to the follow-up event of the *ARGE Donaulaender* in Hainburg, providing them with an overview of current topics and projects (*presentation of the work meeting of the ARGE Donaulaender*).

Item 2 – Reports from the working groups

Working group on culture, science and education

Katka KREJCOVA from the Federal Province of Lower Austria reports:

- Travelling exhibition of DONAUCartoons (Danube cartoons): The exhibition shows cartoons by 10 artists from the 10 Danube countries dealing with the “Danube – its life, its environment and its economy”; high-quality works; bilingual exhibition in German/English; there is also a Bulgarian version; the exhibition was opened at the end of June in St. Pölten and at the end of July in the Bulgarian city of Gabrovo; until the middle of October, it was on display in the city of Russe; at the beginning of 2019, it will be presented in Romania; there is another firm commitment from Serbia for August/September 2019. The exhibition is very flexible. It does not only show works of art, but also illustrates the interconnections between regions, cities and cultural institutions.
- Project in the field of capacity building; bilateral cooperation with the city of Novisad, which will be the European Cultural Capital in 2021 and the European Youth Capital in 2019. The “Job Shadowing” project was developed in cooperation with Novisad and other European Cultural Capitals. People working in and managers of cultural institutions do internships at the cultural institutions of their partners. From 1 to 14 October 2018, Stanislava Jovanovic, one of the curators of the Matica Srpska Gallery at Novisad, visited *Kunstmeile Krems*. During her stay, she got valuable insight into the way in which the Lower Austrian institutions work and into the structures and subsidy system of Lower Austria. This project aims at improving management qualities in the Danube region and creating networks of institutions, regions and cities.

- A conference of European Cultural Capitals from the Danube region is planned for 2019, its topic being “Best practice – Cooperation among European Cultural Capitals and the regions surrounding them. In the coming years, there will be a considerable number of European Cultural Capitals from the Danube region: the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv in 2019, the city of Rijeka in 2020, the cities of Timișoara and Novisad in 2021, a Hungarian city in 2023 (the cities of Győr and Veszprém being on the short list for 2023). The capital of Lower Austria, St. Pölten, has submitted its application to become European Cultural Capital in 2024. This offers many opportunities for joint projects and the establishment of networks, not only for the cities themselves, but also for the regions surrounding them.

Working group on business, tourism and transport

Georg Steiner, Director of Tourism in Linz, Federal Province of Upper Austria, intends to cooperate more intensively with the *ARGE Donaulaender* in the field of tourism in the future. He will chair the working group.

The idea is to develop the Danube as an international cultural and natural route and to attract new target groups to the Danube region (*for further details, please refer to the presentation*).

On 8 November 2018, a tourism conference will be held in Linz, dedicated to the general topic of “Travel Culture”. On 9 November 2018, a Danube workshop will be organised. All stakeholders are invited to take part in this workshop to develop programmes for future submissions (*attachment: Invitation Workshop “Smart Destination Danube”*).

Daniela Stampfl-Walch adds that Austria Guides will organise a “Day for Europe-Danube-Moldova Tour Guides” in February 2019 to coordinate guided tours. The *ARGE Donaulaender* has also been consulted in this matter.

Otto Schwetz from the Municipality of Vienna represents ProDanube Austria and the interests of river navigation, advocating a stimulation of navigation on the Danube. As ProDanube suffers from a lack of regional input, closer cooperation with the *ARGE Donaulaender* is desirable.

Otto Schwetz is involved in PA1 of the EUSDR and is currently working on the development of the “mobility motorways”.

The “Danube-Black Sea (DBS) Gateway Region” project was launched last year with co-financing from the EU. This project was initiated by the *ARGE Donaulaender* and is supported by 10 countries and a number of other partners.

Christian Popp from the Federal Province of Lower Austria reports that the transnational “Danube-Black Sea (DBS) Gateway Region” project was launched within the framework of the Danube Region programme. One of the aims of this project consists in stimulating freight traffic on the Danube, with due consideration given to river navigation regulations, ports, regions and the potential benefits for them. With the project now at mid-term, it will be important to decide how its results (a total of 400 measures) can be carried forward into the future after the end of the project. This project can only be implemented together with the *ARGE Donaulaender*, as regional stakeholders can be addressed via this organisation.

Working group on sustainability, energy and the environment

Christian Steiner from the Federal Province of Lower Austria reports on issues of soil protection and sustainable land use (please refer to the relevant presentation):

The Danube should not merely be regarded as a body of water; its surroundings also have to be taken into account. The working group benefits from experience gained by the Lower Austrian soil protection campaign (www.unserboden.at) and collects information on model examples from the Danube region. The working group dedicated to soil protection closely cooperates with PA 6 of the EUSDR (biodiversity, landscapes, air and soil qualities), but also addresses aspects of other priority areas (PA7, PA8, PA9). At the political level, the *ARGE Donaulaender* has taken three decisions that illustrate these interconnections and are closely associated with PA6 of the EUSDR. A soil protection network in the Danube region (SONDAR – Soil Strategy Network in the Danube Region) has been established within PA6. The European Land and Soil Alliance (ELSA) tries to implement soil protection measures in cooperation with municipalities all over Europe, including the Danube region. In addition, there are university networks, such as the network of life science universities (ICA-CASEE) or the network of Technical University of Vienna and other

universities of the Danube region. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are also taken into account. Some of these 17 goals are closely related to land use.

Erwin Szlezak from the Federal Province of Lower Austria reports on ongoing projects and activities in 2018 in the field of soil protection and shares some prospects for 2019 (*please refer to the relevant presentation*):

At the annual conference of Danube countries in Tulln, showcase projects in the field of small-scale food production were collected and shared with the countries of the Danube region: [http://www.unserboden.at/879-0-](http://www.unserboden.at/879-0-Bericht_DLT_Tagung_2018.htm?&goback=51)

[Bericht_DLT_Tagung_2018.htm?&goback=51](http://www.unserboden.at/879-0-Bericht_DLT_Tagung_2018.htm?&goback=51) Erwin Szlezak points out that the EUSDR does not specifically mention the fields of agriculture and health. However, as these topics are very important for the population, efforts are being made to introduce the topic of agriculture in the context of soil protection and to focus on health through cooperation with “Healthacross” to the EUSDR.

Tino Blondiau from the Lower Austrian Energy and Environment Agency reports on the e-mobility workshop/e-mobility day and the 2018 Energy Future Tour. He advocates cooperation with the Danube countries (*please refer to the relevant presentation*).

Elke Ledl from the Lower Austrian Health and Social Fund (NÖGUS) reports on the “Healthacross” initiative and the “Healthacross for future”, “*Gemeinsam Grenzenlos Gesund*” (project on cross-border health-care) and “B4B-Bridges for Birth” projects as well as cross-border cooperation in the health-care sector (*please refer to the relevant presentation*).

NÖGUS is the body responsible for planning, controlling and financing in the Lower Austrian health-care sector.

The projects of the “Healthacross” initiative have become showcase projects in Europe. Among other things, they make it possible for Czech patients to receive outpatient treatment at the hospital of Gmünd. The first cross-border health-care

centre of the EU will be established in Gmünd in cooperation with the Czech Republic as part of the new “Healthacross for future” project. Health-care experts will work together to treat patients from both Lower Austria and the Czech Republic.

Construction plans have been completed, they will be submitted for approval and construction work is to start in the spring of 2019.

Another series of projects, entitled “*Gemeinsam Grenzenlos Gesund*”, is being implemented in the Lower Austrian *Weinviertel* region; its objective is to bring medical know-how from the Czech Republic to Lower Austria. Physicians from Znojmo offer their support at the hospital at Melk, training their colleagues in new surgical procedures for the treatment of endometriosis. Another project of this series is intended to make it possible for Lower Austrian patients to receive radiotherapy at Znojmo. One patient has already undergone successful radiotherapy treatment in the Czech Republic.

This example from the Czech Republic is to be transferred to Slovakia and, subsequently, to other countries of the Danube region.

NÖGUS cooperates closely with European organisations and hopes to be able to participate in the *ARGE Donaulaender*. NÖGUS already participates in several associations in which border regions address health care topics. NÖGUS has already received several awards for its commitment.

Daniela Stampfl-Walch would welcome the implementation of such projects within the framework of the *ARGE Donaulaender*.

Item 3 – Further development of new and existing working groups

Daniela Stampfl-Walch addresses the issue of cooperation with the Council of Danube Cities and Regions. The establishment of a working group dedicated to this topic is taken into consideration by the *ARGE Donaulaender*.

Simon Ortner, General Secretary of the *ARGE Donaulaender*, Federal Province of Lower Austria, adds that numerous meetings with Peter Langer, General Coordinator of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions, a political representative from the Municipality of Ulm as well as representatives of the Municipality of Vienna took place during the summer. It was agreed to establish a working group to address “urban issues” within the framework of the *ARGE Donaulaender*. Any results from this working group will immediately be shared with the *ARGE Donaulaender*.

Item 4 – Cooperation of the *ARGE Donaulaender* with other institutions

During the past six months, cooperation with other institutions was reviewed:

- the EUSDR (EU Strategy for the Danube Region), e.g., PA1, PA6, PA10
- the AER (Assembly of European Regions) – Mr Eichtinger, member of the Lower Austrian government, heads the task force on digitalisation
- EDM (Danube-Moldova European Region) – a cooperation agreement was concluded

Cooperation with other institutions takes the form of mutual support, invitations, sponsoring, exchange of information and best practice examples.

The *ARGE Donaulaender* regards itself as a promoter of projects, in particular the “DBS Gateway Region” project.

Item 5 – Institutional matters and bylaws of the *ARGE Donaulaender*

Daniela Stampfl-Walch reports that the kick-off event in March 2018 was dedicated to a review of the institutional aspects and the structures of the *ARGE Donaulaender*. In June 2018, a sub-group met in Vienna to take a closer look at the “Joint Declaration” and the “Rules of Procedure” of the *ARGE Donaulaender*. The organisation of cooperation with the Council of Danube Cities and Regions requires some further reflection. Currently, there are three documents: the “Joint Declaration”, the “Rules of Procedure” of the *ARGE Donaulaender*, and the “Declaration” concerning the Council of Danube Cities and Regions. As soon as everything has been clarified, a “Joint Declaration” will be drafted in English.

The bodies:

- Working groups: Together, the members of the working groups have to address contents and projects relating to current or new topics, such as health-care.

In the future, two people in each working group, one each from the regions east and west of the Iron Gate, will be in charge of promoting intensified cooperation.

- The General Secretariat, as a coordinating body, will remain in the hands of the Federal Province of Lower Austria.

The *ARGE Donaulaender* regards itself as a promoter of projects with high visibility, in particular the “DBS Gateway Region” project.

Another aim consists in encouraging participation by countries from the Eastern Danube region; the system of rotating chairmanship of the ARGE will be maintained, and embassies are to be involved to a greater extent.

Item 6 – Report of events since the kick-off event in March 2018 and up-coming events

Simon Ortner presents a summary:

Results of the project dedicated to the “Restructuring the *ARGE Donaulaender*” and important points for the future:

- A stronger focus on project-oriented work. There is a huge potential, and some new stakeholders will present new ideas and take an influence on the *ARGE* of the future.
- Intensified cooperation between the *ARGE Donaulaender* and the EUSDR: The “Danube Strategy Point” is based in Vienna. Contacts with Rudi Schicker, head of the Danube Strategy Point, are excellent. The EUSDR suffers from a lack of contact with the population and is faced with the problem that local, urban and regional aspects do not get enough attention. The *ARGE* could make a valuable contribution in this respect. Attempts will be made to integrate

the *ARGE Donaulaender* into the EUSDR's action plan and to coordinate the work of some of the bodies concerned.

Annual EUSDR Forum: The *ARGE* is to play a more important role in this Forum and maybe participate in chairing it.

- A cooperation agreement was concluded with the Danube-Moldova European Region (EDM).
- Good cooperation with the AER (Assembly of European Regions)
- The *ARGE* has also made important contributions to the European Forum Wachau, a Lower-Austrian initiative that reflects a Europe-wide political network, and will play an active role in organising a new series of events entitled "Salons of the European Forum Wachau".

Results of the restructuring exercise:

- Reduce the number of bodies
- No more meetings of senior officials
- Coordinating body to remain in place
- Working groups are to focus on project-oriented content.
There is to be a showcase project for each area, which will then be used as a starting point for the clustering of topics.
- A loose coordinating group that meets whenever need arises, provides a general overview and designs strategies for the further development process.
- Political body: a platform for politicians to discuss specific projects or cases
- Cooperation with the EUSDR

Item 7 – Public Relations

Daniela Stampf-Walch:

- The website of the *ARGE Donaulaender* is kept up-to-date in relatively simple form, but all documents will still be provided to the bodies via the website.

- The creation of a new logo for the *ARGE Donaulaender* is taken into consideration.
- Social media – as soon as the Federal Province of Lower Austria has set up its new Facebook (or other) account, the *ARGE* will get involved.
- Regina Stierschneider will send the minutes, including all documents and presentations, to all participants via a password-protected link.

Simon Ortner und Daniela Stampf-Walch thank all those present for their commitment and participation.

For the General Secretariat and the accuracy of the minutes:

Daniela Stampf-Walch

Regina Stierschneider
Minute-taker