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EU Strategy for the Danube Region:
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Franziska Sielker and Katja Vonhoff

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Edited by:

Franziska Sielker & Katja Vönhoff

(Coordination of the Danube Strategy Research Network)

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Contacts:

franziska.sielker@fau.de

k.vonhoff@ximpact-bge.de

Preface

This publication is an output of the „Conference on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region: Challenges and Chances 2014 – 2020“. The event was organised by the Danube Strategy Research Network and its partners in Brussels in November 2013.

We very kindly thank our great host, the Representation of the State Baden-Württemberg to the European Union. In particular, we appreciated the support of Johannes Jung, Ingrid Taschek and the event team. Further, our cooperation partners Agapedia – Jürgen Klinsmann Foundation and Leibniz Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning contributed to a successful event of the Danube Strategy Research Network. Moreover, we would like to thank the State Ministry of Baden-Württemberg, Robert Bosch Stiftung and Baden-Württemberg Stiftung for financial support.

Finally, we are grateful for all the contributions of the presenters of the conference and the participants prepared after the conference. We kindly thank the authors for their contribution to this publication. Each author is responsible for the content of her/his paper. As coordinators of the Danube Strategy Research Network, Franziska Sielker and Katja Vonhoff compiled the papers of this publication. We are grateful for proof reading and layout done by Anna Heugel.

The Danube Strategy Research Network has continued its work since the conference in various ways. In October 2015, the DSRN workshop for PhD and Master students will take place as a scientific side event to the 4th EUSDR Annual Forum.

The Danube Strategy Research Network looks forward to further exchange and collaboration with researchers and practitioners from all over Europe.

Executive Summary

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region introduced in 2011 served as an important driver for the development of the ETC programmes 2014-2020. The proceedings at hand result from a conference in 2013 and a series of further smaller workshops organised by the Danube Strategy Research Network (DSRN) between 2012 and 2015. The papers reflect on the EUSDR and its challenges and opportunities through a number of different perspectives.

The first series of papers reflect on the newly developing macro-regional strategies as a new element of the multi-level governance system of the EU. Others focus on the influence and impact on Europeanization and European integration, as well as on the added value and challenges through macro-regional cooperation. The second part presents experiences within different Danube countries analysed from different perspectives, e.g. EU funding implementation, bottom-up approaches as well as institutional relations. The final part discusses the scientific support. The challenges and opportunities identified at the conference for the EUSDR's future are manifold and vary within the different EUSDR regions considerably, more so due to the diversity within the different Priority Areas. The two main challenges that can be extracted from the papers and the discussions at the conference are, first, the different focuses of national and European discussions, and second, the different expectations of stakeholders towards the relevant processes. Whereas the European discussion focuses on governance, alignment of funding etc., the conference has shown the strong dependency of EUSDR developments on national dynamics.

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List of abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DRS	Danube River Show
DSRN	Danube Strategy Research Network
DI	Differentiated integration
EIB	European Investment Bank
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EUSDR	European Union Strategy for the Danube Region
EUSBSR	EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	German Agency for International Development
HELCOM	Helsinki Commission
NCP	National Contact Point
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PAC	Priority Area Coordinator
SEE	South East Europe

Conference opening speech 2013

Peter Friedrich

Minister for the Bundesrat, Europe and International Affairs

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

The macro-regional strategies and their future development are currently at a crossroads. While the Annual Forum in Bukarest in November 2013 with its 900 visitors was a formidable demonstration of the progress reached in the Danube macro region, nevertheless many of the discussions, both in official speeches and in personal conversations, circled around perceived deficiencies in the strategy's overall governance. To me, resolving these issues is indeed vital if we aim to bring the strategy to a next level.

There are several questions which need to be addressed: how can we build a permanent and flexible governance structure for the strategy? What is the precise role of the Commission, the member states and the non-member states? How can we establish a common agenda-setting and decision-making? Do we need a revision of the Action-plan? Is there sufficient support for central actors such as the Priority Area Coordinators and the National Contact Points? These important issues cannot only be judged from a technical or administrative perspective, they must also be addressed on a political level.

At the same time, it is equally essential to provide the adequate means so that political visions can turn into concrete projects. To do so, we have already set important milestones – firstly, the partial harmonization of Operational Programmes within the Danube Strategy, secondly, the establishment of an INTERREG Danube programme. Additionally, it remains important to address and include other programmes, from research and innovation to energy policy or transport. If we just stick to Structural Funds, we will face major limits in realizing the macro-regional strategies' full potential, especially if we think big and strive for large-scale, transnational projects.

Obviously, there are interesting challenges ahead of us. From my point of view, the approach taken by the conference documented in this publication is quite useful, as it mixes hands-on Danube strategy practitioners with researchers from disciplines such as political science, economics or geography, who can provide an outside perspective on our work. Now, that the future governance of the strategy is developed in working groups and government circles, I do believe that a view from an outside perspective can be very beneficial. I sincerely hope that the publication with its multitude of different research disciplines and practical experiences, can help to create new insights and a deeper understanding for experts and practitioners.

I want to thank all participants for their informative contributions and look forward to continuing this exchange.

Mission Statement: Danube Strategy Research Network

The **Danube Strategy Research Network (DSRN)** is an informal interdisciplinary group of researchers cooperating in research projects, publications, discussion rounds and conference organisations. The DSRN offers a platform for transnational and interdisciplinary exchange about EU macro-regional strategies with a focus on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). Founded in 2012 at a kick-off meeting in Stuttgart, the network connects researchers of various sciences such as political science, cultural studies, sociology, economics and geography at various levels of their careers (professors, postdocs, PhD and Master students). An important emphasis is made on exchange between the DSRN researchers and the practitioners of EU macro-regions (officials and politicians from the EU, national, regional and municipal level, actors from civil society and business amongst others). Since the network accumulates researchers, it can act as an independent voice and can make academic debates more accessible to practitioners. Also in long term, the DSRN aims to gather researchers from the whole Danube Region and the EU and thus act as a “collective point” for bridging the various activities together.

Research topics of the DSRN members:

- Processes of European integration and territorial cohesion with regard to macro-regions
- Assessment of the macro-regional concept in general and the EUSDR in particular with a specific focus on multi-level governance and impact of networks
- Implementation process of the EUSDR, including the role of cultures and their specific logics
- New opportunities for political participation of local actors such as civil society representatives
- Role of non-EU countries within the framework of macro-regional strategies

Therefore, a holistic view of macro-regions is provided, especially for the EUSDR and its implications for the Danube Region. The DSRN accompanies the “macro-regionalisation” of Europe and its influence on the European integration process in a critical and constructive manner.

Activities of DSRN and its members include:

- 1) Scientific accompaniment of the process of EU “macro-regionalisation”
- 2) Provision of a platform for exchange between researchers as well as between scientists and practitioners from EU macro-regions;
- 3) Consulting services for practitioners from EU macro-regions;

The DSRN warmly welcomes researchers to get active and enlarge this academic network and its scope.

Introduction: Research in the Danube

Franziska Sielker, Katja Vonhoff

In 2011, two years after the approval of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea (2009), the second macro-regional pilot was launched by the EU: the EU-Strategy for the Danube Region. The European Commission coordinated the preparation of the strategy and its action plan in close cooperation with the member states and the participating Non-EU countries (EC 2010).

The concept of a macro-region was first defined by Pawel Samecki, Interims Commissioner of DG Regio in 2009, as an “an area including territory from a number of different countries or regions associated with one or more common features or challenges” (Samecki 2009). After in-depth assessments in 2013, it has been revised and outlined as an “integrated framework relating to Member States and third countries in the same geographical area” that “addresses common challenges” in order to strengthen cooperation for economic, social and territorial cohesion (EC 2013). The functional and territorial connecting element of the Danube region is the Danube river basin (EC 2010; Sielker and Chilla 2015).

The Danube Region is composed by 14 countries: Austria and Germany as long-term EU members, whereas Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Rumania, Slovenia and Slovakia are new EU countries. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia are candidate countries, whereas the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (in particular oblast Odessa, Uschhorod, Ivano-Frankiwnsk and Czernowitz) are neighbourhood countries with no immediate perspective to join the EU.



Figure 1: The EU Danube Region territorial coverage (Sielker 2015)

A new type of coordination and cooperation has been introduced by the adoption of the EUSDR triggering numerous of old and new initiatives within the region. The

strategy aims to enhance developments in eleven Priority Areas ranging from transport, environment to security or tourism.

Academia has reflected macro-regional strategies from very different perspectives and scientific strands as macro-regions and the underlying concept are touching upon different fields of research, such as cultural sciences or geography. In general, one can differentiate the scientific contributions on European macro-regions depending on the research fields demonstrated in illustration one. Some scientific areas focus on cultural implications of the implementation process, others on (strategic) spatial development. Political Science and Public Management Studies have extensively contributed to assess and compare the (multi-level) governance structure of macro-regions. A vast majority of scientific support does not analyze the concept or overall developments, but delivers specific scientific backing to certain projects, e.g. in navigation or shipping. The latter focuses on topics addressed by EUSDR in order to strengthen the regional development within the Danube Region.

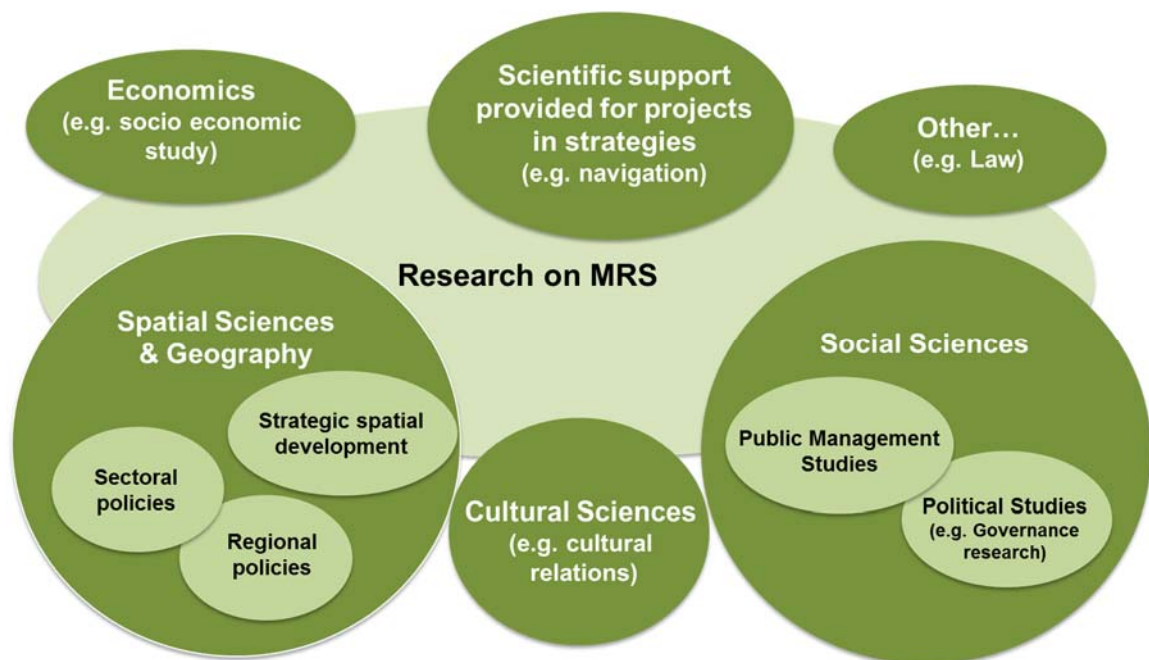


Figure 2: Academic perspectives towards European macro-regions (own illustration)

The Danube Strategy Research Network (DSRN) provides an interdisciplinary and transnational platform for research exchange in particular of Geography and Spatial Planning, Public Management Studies, Political and Cultural Sciences. The DSRN members focus on different areas such as governance research, involvement of civil society, network analysis, strategic spatial development and cultural relations of the Danube region. These topics have been also addressed by the scientists and discussed with practitioners during the “Conference on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region: Challenges and Chances 2014 – 2020” in Brussels, November 2013. This publication summarizes the conference papers of the presentations held in Brussels. Authors were asked to include policy recommendations as a result of their research.

The publication is divided into three main parts: The first part, consisting of academic and political reflections of the EUSDR (Ágh, Vonhoff/Sielker, Chilla/Sielker, Gänzle/Kern, Koller) will be followed by assessments of Danube region experiences from the perspective of scientists and practitioners (Iovu, Republic of Moldova; Studennikov, Ukraine; Schneider, Middle and Lower Danube; Roth, South East Europe, esp. Bulgaria; Valchev, Bulgaria; Kaiser and Györgyi Hungary; Orgonas, Baden-Württemberg and Hungary). In the third part, employees of the European Commission (Corpakis, Gomenginger) discuss the necessary and required scientific support¹ to macro-regions.

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¹ The views expressed are purely those of the writers and may not in any circumstances be regarded as stating an official position of the European Commission.

Part 1: Academic and Political Reflection of the Danube Region Strategy

'Macro-regional cooperation' as a New Form of European Governance: The European Union's Strategies for the Baltic Sea and the Danube Region*

Stefan Gänzle, University of Agder, Kristiansand;

Kristine Kern, Leibniz Institute for Regional Development & University of Potsdam

Introduction

The adoption of the EU 'macro-regional' Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and the Danube Region (EUSDR) in 2009 and in 2011 presents a new step in the development of European territorial cooperation. According to a working definition of the EU Commission, 'macro-regions' – such as the Baltic Sea and the Danube regions – cover “an area including territory from a number of different countries or regions associated with one or more common features or challenges” (European Commission 2009). 'Macro-regions' however, do not exist *per se*; they need to be construed by interested stakeholders framing common features or challenges of 'macro-regions' as a discursive underpinning of functional cooperation and territorial cohesion in areas such as transport, infrastructure and environmental policy. Additionally, macro-regional narratives (may) build on a stock of shared identities, historical and cultural commonalities of such functional or “soft spaces” (Metzger and Schmitt 2012; Sielker 2012; Stead 2011).

In contrast to antecedent forms of sub-regional cooperation at the periphery of the EU in the 1990s (Dangerfield 2015), today's EU macro-regional strategies yield a more comprehensive impact. Hence, we argue: EU macro-regional strategies *first* have an impact on the hitherto existing governance architecture – encompassing the relationship of national, regional and local actors – of the macro-regional territory and *second* have the potential to constitute of an intermediate level of governance between the EU and the national level (including partner countries).

This contribution proposes a critical and theoretically informed analysis exploring the multi-level governance approach as an analytical tool for assessing macro-regional strategies. Then, it briefly assesses the impact of the two existing EU macro-regional strategies – the EUSBSR and the EUSDR – in terms of its impact on private and public actors from EU member and non-member states of the macro-regions. Although, the EU stated that the EU Strategies for the Baltic Sea and the Danube Regions will not be accompanied by the establishment of new institutions, legislation and funding – the so-called three 'No's' –, we demonstrate that these strategies not only have increasingly important repercussions on the existing institutional relations within a given macro-region, but also have started to create a lean governance architecture in its own right. They influence both existing institutions as well as the implementation of EU legislation and require the alignment of projects funded through the EU Structural Funds. While it is too early to evaluate the long-term effects of EU

macro-regional strategies, it is possible to analyze the preliminary effects triggered by the EU Strategies for the Baltic Sea and the Danube Regions.

Internal and external drivers of macro-regional cooperation

Clearly, macro-regions across Europe are different products shaped by a number of quite different internal and external drivers: First the Treaty of Lisbon objectives (Art. 174) to achieve territorial cohesion, completing the goals of social and economic cohesion, triggers significant impact and requires nothing less than the mainstreaming of the territorial dimension in future EU policy-making and implementation; second, in the light of the ongoing economic and financial crisis, the EU is compelled to improve the efficient and effective use of its scarce resources by better cross-policy coordination; third, the growing heterogeneity of the EU after enlargement not only creates the need to “think smaller” but also to think about how to strengthen ties between a wide range of EU actors and stake-holders from the EU, national and subnational levels in a socio-economically heterogeneous European Union.

In addition, the emergence of actual macro-regions is also driven by characteristics of regions themselves, such as biophysical features of macro-regions (in particular regional sea areas, river systems, mountain areas), increasing economic (inter)dependencies and a common historical and cultural heritage of macro-regions as well as active sub-national authorities and civil society actors that cross boundaries and take action at macro-regional scale.

EU multi-level governance and macro-regional cooperation

Macro-regions are deeply embedded in the EU's system of multi-level governance and can therefore be interpreted from multi-level and multi-actor perspectives (Hooghe and Marks 2010; Piattoni 2010). From a holistic perspective, the process of macro-regional cooperation can be conceived as a shift from territorial to functional regions, with significant implications for macro-regions, in particular *vis-à-vis* their spatial dimension, boundaries, institutional set-up, and the way they are governed. This is not restricted to changes of powers across levels of government, but implies territorial rescaling (Keating 2009), new scales of intervention, new actor constellations, as well as variable geometries of governance (Stead 2011: 163). The boundaries of macro-regions are not only fuzzy. They may also differ between the different policy fields embraced by a macro-regional strategy. Since the boundaries, which are, for example, relevant for environmental policy on the one hand (e.g. drainage areas) or soft security on the other, may differ considerably, integrating macro-regional strategies and developing appropriate institutional structures presents a real challenge. Policy integration can be achieved by improving vertical and horizontal interplay across policies and actors, which involves a political mobilization not only of EU actors but also those from civil society and (sub-)national authorities in both EU member states and partner countries.

By considering governance with regard to the local, national, regional and international levels, the multi-level governance approach draws our “attention to three novel developments of contemporary political life” (Piattoni 2009: 2), including *political mobilisation* within and across institutional boundaries, *policy-making* that blurs the

lines between policy-makers and policy-takers and, ultimately, *polity* that produces policy decisions that are less and less understandable as fixed and established (see Piattoni 2009: 2010). From that angle, we explore 1) the horizontal interplay between institutions; 2) the vertical interplay, including the role of sub-national authorities and civil society; and, last, but not least 3) the relationship between EU members and non-members.

We assume that the governance of multi-level systems works in an efficient way if horizontal interplay leads to synergies. Macro-regions transcend the nation-state because they constitute new functional regions which provide new opportunities for the transnational cooperation of subnational actors. Horizontal interplay refers, for example, to the interplay between EU institutions and regional sea conventions, which can lead to synergies as well as disruptions (see Oberthühr and Stokke 2011; van Leeuwen and Kern 2013). Vertical interplay deals with the relations of institutions and actors at different levels. We expect macro-regional cooperation to provide new political opportunities for subnational authorities and civil society in the region. If subnational authorities establish transnational networks, for example, they can develop into constitutive elements of macro-regions. Finally, as macro-regional cooperation transcends EU borders, multi-level governance embraces both EU member and non-member states. The inclusion of (parts of) non-member states is a common feature of all macro-regional strategies, which have been developed or proposed so far. With respect to the non-member states, we assume that macro-regional cooperation, in particular the establishment and consolidation of macro-regional institutions, may be conducive to processes of socialization in the macro-region.

The impact of EU macro-regional strategies in the Baltic Sea and Danube Regions

Although the establishment of new institutions is not intended within the framework of EU macro-regional strategies, the strategies do affect the existing institutions and stimulate new forms of institutional interplay; in other words, macro-regional strategies need to be embedded in the already existing institutions operating at the macro-regional level. The combination of vertical and horizontal interplay with such organizations and conventions appears to be very important for the implementation of the strategy itself, e.g. for the establishment and implementation of priority areas and so-called flagship projects.

Horizontal interplay

In the Baltic Sea Region, amongst the most important institutions at the macro-regional level is the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM). Although the European Union had joined the Helsinki Convention as early as in 1992, its influence on marine governance in a regional set-up such as the Baltic Sea Region has remained rather limited thus far. The EU has much more been concerned with EU-wide and global approaches in term of its environmental legislation. Presently, however, the EUSBSR provides the European Commission with a central – if not policy entrepreneurial – role. The environmental pillar of the EUSBR in general, and its priority areas in particular, overlap with the core tasks of HELCOM, the executive body of the Helsinki

Convention which was set up in 1974 to foster international environmental cooperation in the region. HELCOM's main goal is to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution and to restore and safeguard its ecological balance. After the convention was updated and broadened in scope, it was signed in 1992 and entered into force in 2000. The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan was adopted in 2007 and has since then established the framework for action (Kern 2011). The institutional interplay and the resulting synergies between HELCOM's Baltic Sea Action Plan and the EUSBSR are evident because the EU Strategy recommends the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (European Union 2010: 144 ff.).

Institutional capacities vary considerably between EU macro-regions, and that the success of macro-regional strategies will eventually depend on the institutional capacities of each macro-region. The synergies resulting from the institutional interplay between the EU and HELCOM are most striking in this respect. While HELCOM is in a position to influence decision-making in Brussels, the EU, in turn, can utilize HELCOM as some kind of regional environmental protection agency. Although it is certainly right to emphasise that macro-regional strategies are rather law-shaping than law-making (Schymik 2011: 17), one should not oversee that the EU is also in a process of co-opting existing institutions to implement EU legislation. The analysis of existing environmental legislation such as the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) on the one hand and the EUSBSR on the other shows the interplay between the Strategy and EU legislation. Although the EUSBSR has not created new legislation, it aims for improving the implementation of existing EU legislation (European Union 2010).

Vertical interplay: the role of subnational authorities and civil society

Macro-regional cooperation provides new political opportunities for subnational authorities and civil society. If subnational authorities establish transnational networks, for example, they can develop into constitutive elements of macro-regions. The Baltic Sea and the Danube Strategies differ with respect to the institutional capacities in the macro-region such as the 100-member-strong Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) and the Baltic Metropolises Network who are playing an active role in the implementation of EUSBSR. They also have a long history of co-operation and are relatively well-equipped. Until now only a few networks are operating in EUSDR, such as the Council of the Danube Cities and Regions, and their co-operation is less institutionalised.

Moreover, macro-regional cooperation is underwritten by a trend toward transnationalization of civil society. The Baltic Sea region for example has developed into a highly dynamic area of both cross-border cooperation and transnational networking (Kern 2001; Kern and Löffelsend 2008; Kern 2011) that includes not only cities and subnational regions but also non-governmental organizations covering the whole macro-region. As macro-regional governance is not restricted to the nation-states, this requires the institutionalization of new forms of cooperation and collaboration at macro-regional scale.

Transnational institutions are a constitutive element of macro-regions. Transnational networks and institutions such as the Danube Civil Society Forum or the Coalition Clean Baltic have been put to the forefront because of EU macro-regional strategies. This development opens new opportunities, but it also leads to new challenges because stakeholder participation in macro-regions faces the same legitimacy and accountability problems as stakeholder participation at global scale. Due to a lack of capacities, however, stakeholder participation, for example in the annual forums for the macro-regional strategies, seems to be limited to a small number of organizations with sufficient capacities to participate in such events (Schneider 2013; Kodric 2011).

EU member states and non-members

As an early EUSBSR implementation report of the European Commission indicated, “the strategy is fostering the development of new inclusive networks, as well as increased cooperation and a better division of labour for existing networks”, and, “provides a common reference point for the many organisations in the Baltic Sea Region” (European Commission 2011: 3). Indeed, the EUSBSR as a reference point for cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region seems to be acceptable for non-EU-members who cannot become fully involved in the strategy but should naturally be included in any major framework of macro-regional cooperation (Etzold and Gänzle 2012: 8). Although Russia perceives of the EUSBSR as an EU internal strategy, it has meanwhile launched a North-West Strategy, which de facto provides for several interfaces with the EU strategy (Russian Federation 2012a; b). In the light of the Ukraine crisis, however, cooperation with Russia has been reduced quite dramatically.

As macro-regional cooperation transcends EU borders, multi-level governance is not restricted to member states. Rather macro-regional cooperation is based and strongly intertwined with EU enlargement (see Ágh 2010), the European Neighbourhood Policy, and related programs such as the Northern Dimension (Archer and Etzold 2008). The Northern Dimension was set up to create a framework for cooperation, in particular with the Russian Federation. This framework is important because Russia’s integration remains important for the development of the EUSBSR itself.

Discussion

The process of macro-regional cooperation is deeply embedded in a historical trajectory, which builds on transnational territorial cooperation. If macro-regional cooperation is going to embrace the entire EU, one may assume that macro-regions have the potential to constitute an intermediary level of EU governance between the member states and the European Union. This means that the nation-state paradigm will be complemented by a macro-regional perspective.

An important feature of macro-regional cooperation is the horizontal interplay between macro-regional strategies and existing institutions. It can be argued that the existence of strong institutions such as HELCOM may lead to synergies and facilitate the emergence of decentralized institutionalized complexes in the macro-region, consisting of EU and macro-regional institutions. The co-evolution of HELCOM guidelines and EU legislation has already led to synergies because HELCOM guidelines influenced EU decision-making in Brussels and made EU legislation based

on these guidelines binding for all member states; and *vice versa* the implementation of EU directives in the Baltic Sea Region has been improved by HELCOM initiatives. This case shows that the EU can co-opt macro-regional institutions like HELCOM, which fulfill the tasks of a macro-regional environmental agency. This example provides also evidence that existing macro-regional institutions determine the outcome of macro-regional strategies. Macro-regional strategies, such as the EUSBSR, have the potential to serve as a 'lighthouse' or reference point for macro-regional actors, in particular in cases, such as the Baltic Sea, where a "high degree of institutionalisation has sometimes hampered rather than advanced the pursuance of effective and successful policies" (Joenniemi 2010: 33).

Since macro-regional strategies are built into multi-level systems of governance, they need to improve vertical interplay between and among intergovernmental organizations, nation-states, subnational governments, and stakeholders in the macro-region if they are to provide any tangible added-value. Therefore, macro-regional strategies influence vertical interplay and may trigger territorial rescaling and the emergence of variable geometries of governance. This may empower regional stakeholders and provide new opportunities for the transnational cooperation of subnational governments and non-state actors, in particular major cities and sub-regions.

With respect to the implementation phase of EU macro-regional strategies, it can be argued that differing geopolitical constellations of old/new member and non-member states (Russia in the Baltic Sea; Norway in the North Sea), existing intergovernmental institutions (such as HELCOM), and the capacities of subnational authorities and non-governmental organizations may lead to considerable differences between macro-regional strategies. As macro-regional cooperation leads to the development of new functional regions with flexible boundaries, differences between the pillars of the same macro-regional strategy (in particular: environment, economic development, infrastructure/transport, and soft security) may also become apparent. Hence, it is fair to argue that "[t]ailor-made solutions for each macro-region are needed in order to ensure that the macro-regional approach delivers added-value and helps to release undeveloped potential within a macro-region" (Dubois et al. 2009: 10).

However, macro-regional cooperation has not yet spread evenly across Europe so far – even after the launch of the EU Strategy for the Ionian-Adriatic Region (EUSAIR) and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSAR). Instead it seems to center primarily on central, Eastern and Northern European territories (countries as well as sub-national entities). Germany is already involved in both existing macro-regional strategies (Baltic Sea, Danube), and will also be involved in the Alpine Strategy. There have been discussions on macro-regional strategies that would include western European countries, in particularly the discussion on a North Sea Strategy (Danson 2015), but it is still an open question how these debates will develop and how western and southern European countries will be included in future strategies.

Macro-regional strategies have consequences at EU and national level. At EU level, macro-regional strategies require a closer cooperation of the different European Commission's Directorate Generals. At national level the most important impacts result from the fact that sub-regions become involved in transnational activities in the

macro-regions. This is most obvious when strong sub-regions (such as the German federal states of Baden Wuerttemberg and Bavaria) get involved in macro-regional strategies and develop an own foreign policy. Strengthening the international relations of macro-regions thus has repercussions on German federalism, in particular on the relationship between the federal government and the federal states. The recent development of the Danube Strategy shows that strong subnational authorities such as the German states Bavaria and Baden Württemberg can become dominant players at macro-regional scale, which may in turn have repercussions on the domestic structures.

Conclusion

Macro-regional cooperation, at least for the time being, seems to be far from establishing own institutional, legal, and financial frameworks. The implementation of macro-regional strategies, however, has direct impacts on existing frameworks: Existing macro-regional institutions are co-opted by the EU; the implementation of existing EU legislation (e.g. Marine Strategy Framework Directive) is reinforced with the help of macro-regional institutions and an improved cooperation of national institutions; and existing funding schemes (in particular the EU Structural Funds) need to be re-aligned and adapted to macro-regional strategies which would require “considerable adaptations to their current organisation” (Dühr 2010:45). Hence, to sum up, macro-regional cooperation has the potential to boost functional cooperation at the transnational level (Berkhan et al. 2009) and to reshape the existing architecture of multi-level governance in Europe.

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Europeanisation and macro-regional cooperation – Nine points for discussion

Tobias Chilla, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg

Franziska Sielker, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg

Introduction

Since 2007, macro-regions have appeared on the European map as a new form of territorial cooperation, first in form of the Baltic Sea Region, later followed by the institutionalization of the Danube and Adriatic-Ionian macro-region and currently complemented by the Alpine Region. Macro-regional strategies in different parts of Europe address specific challenges such as the navigation on the Danube River or the environmental cooperation within the Baltic Sea. As the newest tool within territorial cooperation, macro-regional strategies are part of the current dynamics within regional policy. INTERREG programmes or the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation have developed rapidly and educed their own rationales. Although still presenting a rather young instrument macro-regions have already undergone substantial dynamics, partly due to the fact that they have not been predefined.

Scholars of spatial disciplines have soon taken an interest in macro-regions highlighting the new scale, their soft characteristics and the political power games that are played out in this context (e.g. Stead 2012, Faludi 2011, Stocchiero 2012, Gänzle and Kern 2015). From an academic perspective, but also from the practical point of view, it is of interest to reflect on the dynamics macro-regions are undergoing as well as on the consequences this provides for European regional policies and territorial cooperation.

This paper adds to the DSRN conference by locating the discussions on macro-regional strategies in the context of territorial cooperation, by raising nine points for discussion on macro-regions and their possible implications. Thereby, our paper aims at summarizing contemporary discussions on macro-regions and draws a bigger picture of territorial cooperation and changes that could be demonstrated by macro-regions. These new developments offer a diversity of opportunities, but they also are in risk of producing double structures and inefficient additional cooperation structures. The paper postulates that macro-regions as new form of territorial cooperation have implications for policymaking at several levels and thus represent a new form of Europeanization, even if the full extent of their implications on the broader context are not clear, yet. The possible benefits that macro-regional strategies could offer as part of European territorial cooperation are therefore critically to be examined. The nine points of discussion raised here, are a first attempt to locate macro-regions in the context of territorial cooperation. The following section locates macro-regions in the context of the existing landscape of territorial cooperation within the EU.

Macro regions and EU Territorial Cooperation

In the 1960s, territorial cooperation started to become part of the European integration process. These early days are portrayed as grass root developments, which are mainly based around cooperation across borders on a local level. The main aim was

to solve technical problems and find a way 'to get things done' over borders, e.g. through Euroregions. The appointment of Hans von der Groeben as the first Commissioner for Regional Policy (1967-1970) increased the attention given to the emerging field of territorial cooperation. Since the late 1980s, regional programmes such as INTERREG allowed mainly for financial support, a function that remains important nowadays. From the 1990s on, pan-European strategies complemented this with a more political-strategic dimension, starting with the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). Faludi and Waterhout (2002) describe the critics that address the abstract character. However, the role of pan-European strategies within European regional policies is not to be underestimated. These processes paved the ways for further initiatives by triggering discussions on normative guidelines for the spatial dimension of EU policies (Heinelt and Knodt 2011, Dühr et al. 2010). In the early 2000s, the development of the macro-regional strategies represents a new trend addressing the layer between the pan-European Strategies and the regional focus of territorial cooperation and development (see Figure 1).

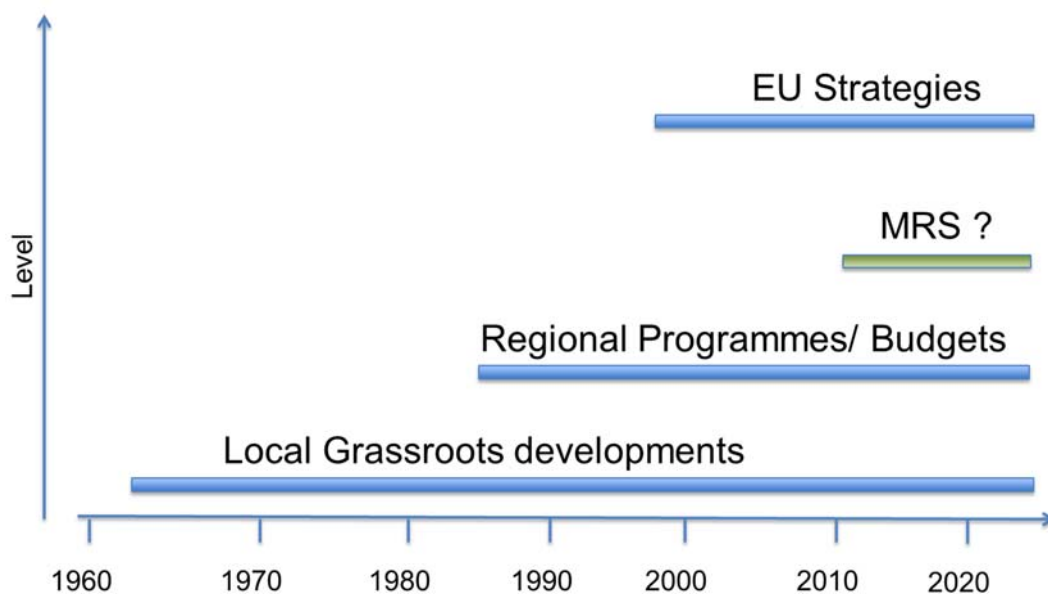


Figure 1: Territorial Cooperation and European Macro-regions (own illustration)

Still representing a rather new concept, macro-regional strategies are not easy to explain towards stakeholders that have not been involved in the different forms of territorial cooperation. Macro-regional strategies fill a gap between the existing approaches, first due to the large perimeter including several countries and second, due to the combination of strategic elements with concrete implementation activities. The following nine points for discussion towards macro-regional cooperation focus on the questions of scale, the institutional context and the content addressed. They discuss the pre-macro-regional development and the changes that come along with macro-regional strategies.

Nine points for discussion

1. New political perimeters?

The first point of discussion addresses the question of the territorial focus and enlarged perimeters of cooperation within the EU. In the pre-macro-regional time a

diversity of programmes with different perimeters from the cross-border to the interregional scale existed, and they go on to do so. On the one hand, the perimeter of a macro-region is comparable to those of transnational programmes, even if the exact perimeters differ at least slightly (as in the case of the Danube region before 2014). Thus, from a perspective of territorial cooperation this perimeter has been addressed before. On the other hand, the 'old' perimeters were mainly eligibility spaces of funding programmes. The novelty with the macro-regional strategies is the interdisciplinary, more strategic and political approach at this particular scale. So the perimeter is not the novelty, it is more about its function.

2. Fluid perimeters?

An important characteristic of the still young macro-regions is their soft character. The outer perimeter for cooperation is pre-set, without predicting a particular scalar fix for the projects implemented as part of a macro-region. More concretely, depending on the topic, the territorial focus may vary substantially. This application of different territorial foci in different priority areas is reminding the notion of flexible geographies and soft spaces (Allmendinger et al. 2014). The general macro-regional perimeters have not been questioned in the existing regions. On the contrary, the macro-regional perimeter show indications of hardening and institutionalization processes as Metzger and Schmitt (2012) have shown for the Baltic Sea Region. The soft character might be subject to change and represent intermediate characteristics. At first hand, the naming of these largescale regions as the Danube Region or the Baltic Sea region on a European map is an advantage, which leads to a certain sense of belonging together. The perimeter serves as a frame within which the different activities are implemented within flexible, fluid perimeters. The diversity of scales addressed in the different policy areas lead however to complex governance arrangements (Stead et. al 2015). As an example questions on the waterway maintenance address numerous countries, whereas projects within tourism might involve few countries. This could lead to parallel strategies within the Priority Areas and little complementary activities.

3. A functional space?

The third point for discussion reflects on the functional aspects of macro-regions. Hooghe and Marks (2003) differentiate between two types of multi-level-governance in order to explain the increasing importance of informal aspects of cooperation within the EU, underlining the move from one type to another, more informal, type that refers to functional features. The European Commission has highlighted macro-regional strategies as a type of cooperation based on functional arguments (CEC 2013). Are they more functional than other types of cooperation? Classical territorial cooperation areas within the EU were mainly argued around political and socioeconomic characteristics, e.g. the thresholds for eligible areas within the Cohesion Funds of the EU. With the development of macro-regions fluvial and geomorphological features became part of a political reasoning based on functional challenges and geographical elements. A closer look reveals that the macro-regional dynamics are based on a variety of topics embracing socioeconomic relations as much as topics related to the regional infrastructure and elements. The political reasoning in the background of these geographical delimitations is, however, a popular discourse shaping the "macro-regional thinking", which – as we argue here – does not have major

implications with regard to functional aspects, but remains an important political argument.

4. A stronger funding continuity?

Territorial cooperation programmes are organized in seven years budget periods, where from one period to another new priorities are negotiated. With respect to macro-regional strategies hope arises that a stronger continuity is to be expected, e.g. due to the pooling of debates or the better overview of activities and funding schemes. Macro-regional strategies could provide an opportunity for continuation through the alignment of territorial cooperation programmes with other programmes and funding institutions (e.g. the EIB). In more political words, macro-regional strategies offer the opportunity to pursue long-term strategies and might overcome temporal limitations in strategic regional development. If macro-regional strategies can fulfill this expectation depends on the macro-regional committees but as well on the information flows to other programmes and on the political dynamics.

5. A new way of funding alignment?

The fifth point of discussion invokes funding rationales. A prominent political argument to push macro-regional strategies is that they could serve as a vehicle to overcome the parallelism of programme structures of EU regional policies. This is the more important as new budgets for macro-regional activities are explicitly excluded. The hope that macro-regional strategies would serve as a roof for existing programmes and strategies is plausible, but this is not a trivial argument. Particularly within the Danube Region Strategy the alignment of funding is a crucial narrative. The adjustment of the INTERREG transnational cooperation area to the perimeter of the Danube Region Strategy is widely seen as an important step to be able to align these with other funds, e.g. the funds supporting accessing countries or neighbouring countries. The institutional ambitions are evident, wherefore positive effects are likely. Nevertheless, the different rationales of programmes have to be taken into account.

6. Linking non-EU countries?

The macro-regional framework due to its soft characteristics and loose coupling to funding schemes and administrative regulations is expected to offer the possibility to strategically cooperate between EU member States and third countries. The intention to pursue issue-bound cooperation is evident, e.g. through the question of shipping or water quality along the Danube where the macro-regional format offers the opportunity to develop strategies independent of membership or EU formalities.

7. High politics on a regional level?

An interesting point of discussion within the macro-regional discourse is the question whether macro-regions could turn out to link high politics, such as member states debating regional policy budgets, with low politics, such as projects on the regional and local level. The political attention that has been given to e.g. Annual Forums by the attendance of high level politicians such as the German chancellor at the annual forum in Regensburg (2012) or the different ministries in Ulm (2015) indicate the political power that can be provided by these strategies. The presence of Commissioners, national and regional representative shows the opportunity of macro-regional inter-level discussions to prepare decision-making. However, the inclusion those stakeholders included in the political decision process and those involved in the

implementation activities, offers the opportunity to prepare a diversity of political strategies and decisions. This direct link of possible implementation activities with strategic political discussion within a region is a novelty in the EU regional policies and certainly bears potential. So far, the attendance of high politicians have fulfilled a rather representative task.

8. An intergovernmental cooperation?

The institutionalization of macro-regional governance has led to a new element within the multilevel governance system of the EU. The pre-macro-regional phase of territorial cooperation applies supranational elements as much as subnational elements strongly building on regional governance structures. Macro-regional strategies bring a strong intergovernmental focus into this dimension, with macro-regional committees such as Steering Groups building on national representative structures. The EUSDR governance setup is an example where national representatives have a strong influence on the activities within the different Priority Areas. The Commission's role in macro-regional strategies has mostly been a coordinative and monitoring task in the implementation phase and is often described as facilitating the implementation. The European dimension within the macro-regional strategies is however of particular visibility in the development phase of the strategy paper with the Commission taking over a central role in coordinating and formulation the document. The Member States are asked by the Commission to have the main responsibility in implementing the strategy. The possible intergovernmental axis that could be provided through macro-regional committees might play an important role, but depends largely on political practice in the Steering Groups as the content related intergovernmental committees and the minister meetings adjoined to the strategy.

9. A new space for policymaking?

Building on intergovernmental elements and being connected to the EU funding schemes, macro-regional strategies aim at supporting strategic decisions within different policy fields. These relate to so called functional challenges and are aiming at initiating joint actions within the regions. Thus, macro-regions can be reflected upon as a new space for policymaking, where an uploading of policies, that had been dealt with bilaterally, are now object of intergovernmental committees. The uploading of policy making with macro-regional strategies is not only promoted by governmental representatives, but also by international organizations such as the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR). For some policy fields, macro-regional strategies are certainly perceived as an important space for agenda setting. Macro-regions can thus be described as new spaces of agenda setting.

Evolution of territorial cooperation through macro-regions?

Macro-regional strategies are one of many instruments of territorial cooperation offering new opportunities due to its approach regarding governance, scope and perimeter. Their role within the landscape of territorial cooperation instruments is still in the process of definition. This future role of macro-regions depends on the one hand on the developments within the macro-region itself and on the other hand on contemporary political dynamics and the further developments of other tools of European territorial cooperation. This is e.g. shown through the alignment of the INTERREG perimeter with the territorial coverage of the Danube Region.

The nine points discussed above reflect on the novelties represented by macro-regional characteristics within European territorial cooperation. Summarising, macro-regional strategies are building on strategic elements, they are applied and developed in intergovernmental contexts and are implemented with a focus of using existing funds. While the strategy documents and the Action Plan are organized via Priority Areas, the strategy names overall development goals for the region, such as an increased use of the Danube as a transport axis. While the macro-regional strategy does not come alongside with financial or political power in itself, these soft features offer a political space where a policy upload can take place. The definitions, the strategy documents and the examples provided still feature an abstract picture of what a macro-region is. It certainly is a soft instrument that can serve as a roof for a variety of arguments and political arenas, such as functional argumentations, neighbourhood policies and sectoral communities. With macro-regional strategies policy documents have come into being that allow for concretized actions, but at the same time offer sufficiently abstract formulated goals for the development of the respective regions. This intermediate type of documents for particular regions within territorial cooperation is an element that links political ideas with concrete actions in the context of regional policies. Macro-regional strategies could possibly facilitate horizontal and vertical coordination. The dynamics that the political negotiations triggered through these processes will determine the use of this new tool for territorial cooperation.

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The EU Strategy for the Danube Region: challenges and chances 2014-2012

Attila Ágh, Budapest Corvinus University

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region is presented here as Europe's Promise, the vehicle for European Renewal. It suggests a new conceptual framework for the New Europe in four dimensions:

The nature of the EU crisis has changed basically. First, the global crisis management is over, we are already in the transformation crisis to build up the New Europe, and the EUSDR as a big opportunity for the new European architecture. The former concentration on the global crisis management led to the dominance of top-down decision-making instead of multi-level governance and to focus on the Competitive Core Europe in order to save the Eurozone, and/or to the special crisis management in the South. It has also led to a marginalization of many issues, including the EUSDR. In the new Europe it is time to reinvent or re-launch the EUSDR. The message from the European Council Summit on 25 October 2013 (EUCO 196/13) refers to: "Signs of economic recovery are visible, but the EU needs to pursue its efforts to increase growth potential", in a way of the new growth strategy by "digital economy, innovation and services".

The new growth perspectives have opened up. Second, after the global crisis in 2009 it became clear that there is no return to the pre-crisis situation, including the traditional GDP based growth model. Even the quantitative growth of catching up processes is possible in a new way, through qualitative growth in the terms of EU2020 Strategy. The EUSDR may be the symbol for the change of development paradigms, since the Danube valley is economically very heterogeneous, although culturally and socially very much connected. Thus, it can prove the capacity of social capital and the bottom-up approach, as a laboratory for EU2020 by turning territorial capital to social capital. This change can be conceptualized as a transition from the Multispeed Europe to the institutionalized-regionalized Multifloor Europe.

The EUSDR as the integrating-bridging of three into one functional macro-region:

Third, the EU is on the way towards an macro-regionalization, e.g. towards the regions of West, North, South, East and (the emerging) South-East or Balkans. The functional macroregions are the best ways of bridging them for facilitating the implementation of the EU2020 Strategy. The EUSDR concerns three regions, West, East and South-East. Its comparative advantage in building the New Europe in such a way that it integrates three regions into one functional macro-region. The author assumes that, after a decade or so, the entire EU will be composed of (partly overlapping) functional macro-regions, and the EUSDR has played a pioneering role in this process.

The "finalité politique": creating Competitive-Cohesive Europe

Fourth, the present focus on the Competitive Core within the EU can only be a Pyrrhic victory for the EU28. The EU cannot be competitive in the long run in the accelerating

globalization as a fragmented Europe. The EUSDR is a major vehicle for re-uniting the EU28 as a competitive-cohesive Europe. The EUSDR embodies the change of paradigms from the narrow focus of saving the Eurozone to the Re-United Europe as a new development in integrative balancing. More Europe means Federative Europe or “Symmetrical EU” instead of the former “Asymmetrical EU” with “systemic failures” and “structural imbalances” (in Barroso’s terms).

Conclusions: it is the right time to take the opportunity for EUDRS

The Future of Europe at the Danube is quite optimistic if (1) the opportunity given by the transformation crisis will be taken, (2) the new growth perspectives will be opened, (3) the bridge between the macro-regions will be built and (4) the turn from a fragmented Europe to the competitive-cohesive Europe will be completed. The most developed regions in the Danube region could initiate these changes and act as icebreakers; the new member states have to prepare the means of transformation management and facilitating devices for the “bridge”; and the Balkan states have to elaborate the “connectivity” not only in logistics, but also socially, culturally and politically. In some ways, the EUSDR has to build up its own “pooled sovereignty”.

The Transformation Crisis and the Core-Periphery Divide in the EU: The European Futures at the Danube

Attila Ágh, Budapest Corvinus University

Introduction: The wake-up call and the creative crisis in the EU

“The crisis has acted as a wake-up call for Europe to respond to the changing global order.” (González 2010: 3).

The EU has gone through several development stages that has necessitated a permanent redefinition of the EU. Under the pressure of global crisis, it has become common sense that the EU is in ‘crisis’ or even in its ‘final crisis’. Thus, the word ‘crisis’ has been again so inflated that there is a fashionable saying: “crisis is just a period between two other crises”. In fact, the EU has always been in ‘crisis’, it comes from its ‘sui generis’ nature of being always ‘in the making’. However, there have recently been obviously three markedly different periods of crisis: (1) the ‘immobility crisis’ in the 2000s, (2) the global crisis in the late 2000s and early 2010s and (3) the ‘transformation crisis’ in the mid-2010s. Due to both the external conditions and the domestic developments the types of differentiated integration/membership in these three periods have also been crucially different, therefore the three above mentioned periods have to be overviewed briefly (for further information see Ágh and Vass 2013).

First, the immobility crisis came from the asymmetrical nature of the EU developments, advancing in some fields but not ready to move further in some other, closely interrelated fields in the decade of disorder. The ‘Fair-Weather Europe’ or the ‘Fair-Weather Euro’ is a dangerous myth about this period of an ‘asymmetrical Europe’ with the lack of interconnectedness and coherence among and within the policies, and with the ensuing half-made decisions and too easy compromises. Before

the global crisis, the member states still had 'little appetite for policy reform', therefore "Policy integration continued at a slow pace. Only modest progress was made in strengthening eurozone governance" (Tsoukalis et al. 2010: 12). Thus "several key question remain unanswered" (Emmanouilidis 2011: 1). In this period a growing gap emerged between policies and institutions as well, so Habermas team has emphasized that "The euro crisis reflects the failure of a dead end policy. (...) This self-reinforcing destabilization is largely the product of *ad hoc* crisis management strategies, which have barely begun to address the challenge of consolidating European institutions." (Bofinger et al. 2012: 5). Actually, this fragile, quasi stagnation period of 'Asymmetrical Europe' created those serious problems that were drastically discovered by the global crisis. Very briefly, beyond the well-known tension between the Monetary Europe and Fiscal Europe, the introduction of the Euro generated deep socio-economic distortions in the weaker Eurozone member states, both by weakening their economic competitiveness and by tolerating their institutional backwardness, as the Greek case with its complete immobilism and long-term stagnation clearly illustrates. The sad truth about immobilism is that „If there is no public pressure on individual member states, and if at the same time the significance of the EU strategy is not understood by the electorate, national governments will not feel compelled to change anything." (Fritz-Vannahme et al. 2010: 3,7). By the way, the first reaction to the global crisis was the 'economic nationalism' of member states with the widening competitiveness gap within the EU and with the counterproductive strategies for the EU. Thus, after the outbreak of the global crisis the favourite idea has been in the Anglo-American press that "the European Union is dying" (see the detailed overview of publications in Thies 2012).

Second, in the global crisis period there was a painful priority of direct crisis management that reached its peak with the Greek sovereign debt crisis. Actually, the year 2010 was an "*annus horribilis*", a turbulent year of horror. At the same time the global crisis was a creative crisis with a drastic wake-up call. It was brutally discovering the weaknesses of the EU, which can be described with the terms of the tension, gap, non-correspondence, asymmetry and disharmony. There was a *systemic misfit* or mismatch between/among polities, politics and policies within the EU that resulted in the lack of complexity management or in the missing systemic approach. The final outcome has been the toxic effect of EU transfers to the South due to their ill-designed adjustment and/or to their immature Eurozone membership. In fact, the huge competitiveness gap within the Eurozone has also been the result of their counter-productive Eurozone membership. The growing distance between/among EU member states in competitiveness was due to the lack of structural reforms resulting in the poor economic policies and the low governance capacities of the weak Eurozone member states that came to the surface drastically in the global crisis.

As Fabian Zuleeg warned already in 2010: "[S]tructural reform is necessary in many countries if we wish to avoid future crises. (...) The EU can also go further: its growth strategy and available EU funding must aim to help these countries to invest into future and to carry out the necessary structural reforms. (...) In the absence of joint action, if certain countries are allowed to deteriorate further, Europe will face low growth and further crisis in future" (Zuleeg 2010: 15). Given its depth, this crisis

marginalized all other vital EU problems beyond the saving the euro and keeping the competitiveness of the EU Core in the turbulent world. Altogether, the global crisis produced a lost decade with a lost (young) generation. It proved that the EU had to pay a high price for the “systemic misfit” both in the EU as a whole, and within its member states.

Third, the global crisis has pushed the EU in the present transformation crisis to the way of “harmonising” its institutions and policies with each other. Thanks to the big “earthquake” in 2010, “Between the summers of 2011 and 2012 the political discourse on EU integration changed dramatically. (...) Now, the old debate about a ‘Political Union’ (...) is back” (Janning 2012: 1). It has become clear that there has been no return to the pre-crisis situation of ‘asymmetrical Europe’ with a high-level quasi stagnation. The transformation has begun with the strong economic governance and it has soon re-generated the idea of Federative Europe and Political Union to overcome the systemic misfit by a ‘systematized’ Europe. The last years have demonstrated that the basic reason for the general crisis of the EU is not the outbreak of global crisis but this “chaotic Europe” in itself with its deep internal tensions, since the global crisis has not created but just discovered the substantial weaknesses of the EU.

Due to this ‘creative crisis effect’, the recent transformation crisis has to deal with a long time arrangement for the well-working future Europe based on the principles of crisis-resilience and sustainability, with the close correspondence between/among policies and institutions, and also within them. The Habermas team has pointed out that the main problem for the Eurozone is the institutional deficit as “an inadequate institutional underpinning of the common currency” (Bofinger et al. 2012: 6-7). In general, “looking beyond the current crisis, the promise of a ‘social Europe’ also depends upon this.” (Bofinger et al. 2012: 6-7). They argue for the “communitarization” to “correct the structural imbalances within the eurozone” in order to get “the synergetic benefits of European unification” (Bofinger et al. 2012: 8). Actually, this is a program for Competitive-Cohesive Europe in its latest and largest meaning.

The Multi-Floor Europe and the macro-regional memberships

Any decision to focus on the “Competitive Core” can only be a Pyrrhic victory: “On both sides, an increasing national focus and a rise in populism as well as anti-EU sentiment are evident in all parts of society. The EU is more and more perceived as a problem. The weakest hold that the EU, and especially core countries in the euro zone, are imposing too much on them and asking too much from them.” (Emmanouilidis 2011: 13).

History matters and regions matter. The EU28 is more than a “Multi-Speed” Europe, since it is already a “Multi-Floor” Europe (Ágh 2013b), since the different member states’ positions have been institutionalized, i.e. rather strictly arranged and regulated legally. In the EU’s operating system there are in fact four floors as institutionalized membership positions. Thus, in the present stage of transformation crisis it is not enough to refer to the deep divide between the core and periphery in general, but it

is necessary to specify both of them in a more detailed way as Core-1 and Core-2, as well as Periphery-1 and Periphery-2. Consequently, it is important nowadays to distinguish between the Southern and the Eastern periphery. In the global crisis period there was an increasing differentiation both between Core-1 and Core-2 (West and North), and between Periphery-1 and Periphery-2 (South and East). The South has in fact fallen out of Core-1, since the formal attachment to it has only been a pseudo-convergence that has turned from an asset to a liability for the Core-1 due to the serious burden of their huge sovereign debts (see Magone 2013). The East has become the semi-periphery of Germany and Austria, so it has been closely integrated to the Core-1 by production structures, it has only produced dependent development, since these states have become deeply internally divided to the modernised and declining parts. Thus, the crucial issue for the new member states is their domestic social cohesion, i.e. to be united not only with the EU, but also uniting the country as a whole.

The “Four-Level Europe” with its “regional memberships” is the simplest description of the present situation in the EU. In addition, after some years the EU may be completely regionalized in the form of partly overlapping functional macro-regions. Thus, polity-wise this macro-regionalization reacting to the fragmentation may appear as the deep structural feature of the EU. A new balancing system may emerge, by balancing the EU not only in its central institutions but also “regionally”. This might actually generate the partial decomposition of the EU to the four worlds of the regional - Nordic, West-Continental, Southern and Eastern – regimes, later extended to the fifth, Balkan macro-region, although EU institutions might still work above them as relatively well-regulated functional meta-system. This is not a disintegration situation but a transparent, balanced, institutionalized and legitimate structuring process, through which the relationships within the regions would be intensified as stable coalitions, and among them some common interests would be formulated and represented at the EU level. This regionalized EU could still be relatively successful in competing within the global arena, but it would be a much looser organization, in which the solidarity principle might be applied more and more within a region, to a smaller circle of neighbouring countries than in the EU as a whole. The “forgotten crisis” of the East has just been mentioned from time to time by the international media but not at the official forums. For this neglect the EU is now paying the high price in the South, and the price may be equally high in the East. (for further information see Àgh, 2013a, and Àgh, Kaiser and Koller (2010, 2011).

Against the global pressure the transformation crisis has recently demanded a progressive redefinition the EU, namely polity-wise as the rebuilding the all-European architecture and policy-wise as the dynamic extension of the EU policy universe. The present decade will be a tough stress test for the EU in intellectual learning and social innovation. Ulrich Beck formulated already this idea at the early stage of the global crisis in a very marked way: “If the EU did not exist, we would have to invent it today. (...) Europe does not need less Europe – it needs more Europe. The global crisis shows that monetary union cannot be achieved without political union. (...) This crisis cries out to be transformed into a long overdue new founding of the EU. (...) an EU rejuvenated by the crisis.” (Beck 2009). In a word, the global crisis raised the alternative between the More Europe (integration) and the Less Europe

(fragmentation), i.e. re-establishing the integrative balancing within the EU by running ahead and creating a “harmony” at higher level, or removing the latest achievements to restore the balance at a much lower level. In the present situation the EU faces the Alternative Scenarios between the Cohesive-Integrated Europe and the Fragmented-Disintegrated Europe.

Integrative balancing in the Competitive-Cohesive Europe

“The focus of research on social progress thus shifted from GDP to defining, measuring and attempting to explain a broader set of factors deemed to effect the well-being of individuals in societies, which together have been termed ‘quality of life’. Research on social progress has also begun taking the well-being of future generations into account by examining sustainability issues.”
(Theodoropoulou 2009: 14).

The deep changes in the socio-economic drivers began much before the global crisis, and they have been more important, long-term factors than the short-term crisis effects. Therefore, in the transformation crisis there is a need for the basic changes also in the conceptual framework of the EU in order to redesign the EU development paradigm and consequently the EU cohesion policy profile. Obviously, the constant situation of ‘the EU in the making’ demands constructivist and discursive approach in the European Studies, since the meaning of the EU in all aspects has recently been re-constructed and discursively re-confirmed. Thus, it is necessary for the Core-Periphery discussion to follow how the development paradigm and its cohesion policy - or the Social Europe and the Cohesive Europe - has recently been re-constructed or re-designed because the new paradigm gives new criteria to evaluate the positive or negative, progressive and regressive divergences.

First of all, since the mid-2000s the new paradigm of social progress has figured on the EU agenda. The “Going beyond GDP” was a programme of more Europe already in the late 2000s, with the more competitive Europe based on the human capital and more cohesive Europe based on social cohesion at the same time that can be called Competitive-Cohesive Europe. The “widening” to the qualitatively new policies of the innovation triangle and the “deepening” to the more integrated institutional structures of the higher education, research and production has been considered the new driver of economic growth. The social progress has been a genuine European idea that can lead to the European renewal as the ambitious vision of the EU2020 Strategy indicates. The complex indicators of sustainable social progress have proven that the proper policy mix of the economic and social policy generates high social productivity. In the transformation crisis, it has become evident that the EU can return to the sustainable socio-economic growth only by embarking upon a qualitatively new way of development. The EU “must continue to develop so that it can combine successful short-term consolidation and the enhanced long-term Europe 2020 goals of inclusive growth, social cohesion and social inclusion. Or, to put it another way, what is needed is a model for the future Economic and Social Governance of the EU.” (Fischer and Hoffman 2011: 8). Thus, social progress has given the new criteria for differentiated integration, i.e. for the new convergence versus divergence in both “widening” and “deepening”.

This increasing tension between the Core and the Periphery has raised new demands for the cohesion policy as well. Cohesion policy could have been the main device to solve, or at least to mitigate this new gap, since cohesion policy has always been the vital instrument for the Cohesive Europe. There has been a constant need for these cohesive measures, since the large diversity of the member states has always necessitated the permanent mechanisms for the EU assistance in various policy fields. The Cohesion Fund was an emblematic case for the special practice of this device. The genuine cohesion policy may be called “*integrative balancing*” because the symmetrical EU integration presupposes the proper, “ever changing” cohesive measures to strengthen the convergence process within the EU. Cohesion policy as the main instrument of Cohesive Europe has to act in the spirit of integrative balancing, i.e. by empowering the unequal external partners through facilitating devices for an effective integration. Thus, the role of cohesion policy cannot be reduced to the new member states, since this cohesive mechanism has to work in all policy fields and in all member states in the extended meaning of integrative balancing as the harmonizing effect of the integration process.

The EU is a highly compound polity, in which the EU cohesion policy means a wide range of financial and other instruments addressing economic, social and territorial disparities in Europe. No doubt that cohesion policy is the dynamic vehicle to keep the member states together to create a Competitive-Cohesive Europe. The importance of cohesive measures has recently been growing, since the European policy universe has undergone deep changes in the last years due to its own “deepening” and “widening”, and much more is to come. The global crisis has indicated the failure of the “Convergence Machine” as the World Bank experts have observed (Gill and Raiser 2011). In the current situation there has been more disharmony and less effective cohesion policy in the South and the East in the new terms of social progress than in the old terms of GDP-centric economic growth. No doubt that the “integrative balancing” has been fatally damaged by the global crisis, above all in its original meaning of cohesion policy for the less developed member states. The main reason, again, was not the global crisis itself, but basically the weakness and ineffectiveness of the cohesion policy as facilitating device. Both the social cohesion within the member states and the solidarity among them EU have faded away. Social explosion has taken place both inside the member states and outside the member states, splitting Europe to “Four Europes” with some “islands” in-between. This controversial situation can create a “Euro-Fortress” with some strong bastions but with long and weak walls.

The transformation crisis period demands, however, a new extension of cohesion policy serving the new Competitive-Cohesive Europe for the restoration of Integrated Europe versus Fragmented Europe. Cohesive Europe has a new meaning as a complex system of cohesive economic, political, social and cultural units in a holistic approach with complexity management. The EU needs a well-organized structure for the upward efforts in the “*policy memberships*” that facilitate the transitions between the levels of the policy and institutional integration in order to create a dynamic unity of diversity in the EU28. The dynamic reproduction of convergence needs ‘elevators’

as effective facilitating devices between the different floors of the European institutional architecture.²

From Growthmania to Sustania at the Danube in the EU2020 perspective

“You are in panic because of the crisis, but out of crisis something better will emerge.” (The remark of Jean Monnet to his colleagues that has recently been quoted by Jacques Delors 2012).

Discussing the Core-Periphery relations from the all-European perspective it has been the main argument of this paper that the Competitive EU and Cohesive EU have to be reconciled into the Competitive-Cohesive EU, since the EU cannot remain competitive “externally” for a long run without being cohesive and inclusive enough “internally”. After the first years of transformation crisis the EU itself has to make the move from the Competitive Core Europe to the Competitive-Cohesive Europe in order to re-unite the EU28 after the global crisis. Yet, the removal of the heavy deficits is a separate regional program at the new member state level that needs a serious effort of the member states concerned. Sustainable institutions have to be established in new member states, not only with high performance but with a high capacity for adaptation as “crisis resilient” institutions like the earth quake resistance buildings. The paper argues that nowadays the new member states region has its own special transformation crisis and its fate is crucial also for Europe’s future as a Competitive-Cohesive Europe with sustainable economy, society and democracy at the Danube. This future-oriented definition of the EU has also aimed at the rediscovery of the post-crisis perspectives for the new member states. At the same time, the fate of new member states depends also on the efforts for a Cohesive Europe, since the divided Europe will be condemned to the systemic riots, Euroscepticism and anti-democratic responses.

After the five years of global crisis management the EU has turned step by step to the building of the new European architecture. The EU is already in the post-crisis period with the task of the biggest and deepest transformation of its history by moving from the extremely asymmetrical integration to the more symmetrical and balanced integration, and from Growthmania to Sustania. Hopefully, from this creative crisis “something better will emerge”, as Jean Monnet has suggested in this motto above. With the proper integrative balancing, after the age of the “nationalization” of citizens in the nation states there would be an age of the Europeanization of citizens with their politicization, socialization and “culturalization” in the EU as a real transnational polity. The common future as the new perspectives for the Competitive-Cohesive Europe will create the common European *demos* in some generations. The original idea of Jean Monnet was that after the economic integration the member states have to turn to the “cultural integration”. Indeed, the overcoming of the global crisis may create the common future with shared new values and achievements, based on the common history as a common destiny for all European peoples.

² Thus, the facilitating fund is not a new idea, it originates from 1993, and with a similar Fund the Eastern enlargement can also lead “to rapid convergence, as it had earlier in the case of the Cohesion Four (Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain)” (Tsoukalis et al. 2010: 11). Further proposals for the new Facilitating Funds have to be elaborated to promote the catching up process in the new member states at this juncture.

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The European Commission's evaluation of macro-regional strategies: An academic assessment

Katja Vonhoff, University of Stuttgart

Franziska Sielker, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg

Introduction

In June 2013, the European Commission published its evaluation report on the new political concept “EU macro-regional strategies” (see European Commission 2013a, European Commission 2013b) based on the two pilot strategies in the Baltic Sea Region (adopted by the European Council in 2009) and in the Danube Region (adopted in 2011). Due to other regions having expressed their interest in developing a similar approach the European Commission aimed for evaluating these two strategies first, albeit having been few time in implementation. The report also clarified the macro-regional concept as such defining it as “an integrated framework relating to Member States and third countries in the same geographical area” (European Commission 2013a: 3). It aims to “address common challenges” and to intensify transnational “cooperation for economic, social and territorial cohesion” (European Commission 2013b: 3). The Commission’s evaluation was part of a wider process to assess the macro-regional concept and served as a basis for the European Council decision-making on further macro-regional strategies. The report positively evaluated the macro-regional approach, identifying some points of criticism. The general positive outcome of the evaluation was perceived well particular in the Alpine and Adriatic-Ionian region where the preparations for a macro-regional strategy already have been started. Nevertheless, in several informal meetings and discussions with EUSDR stakeholders the authors have experienced that many questions remained untouched in the report. This prompted us to take a closer look at the evaluation, its aims, the procedure and the different expectation towards it.

The paper reflects on the European Commission’s evaluation through the lenses of different aspects of evaluation theory. This allows to analytically assess what has been done how, with what aim and by whom. It demonstrates that hardly all different stakeholders’ expectations towards such an evaluation process could have been met. Generally, the stakeholders within the first two existing strategies showed signs of dissatisfaction with the evaluation. Exemplary, for the different macro-regional governance elements, such as National Coordinators (NC) and Priority Area Coordinators (PAC), the overall responsibilities were identified³. However, their exact role, cooperation mechanisms with other stakeholders and detailed activities were not further defined. These remain matter to continuous negotiation process of actors within their own bureaucracies, with their foreign colleagues and EU actors. Many of these experts expected that a systematic analysis would help to clarify their profile as well as the macro-regional aims, functions and governance. The overall evaluation results were rather positive. This is also due to the open way, the question, whether

³ For example, a PAC has to coordinate a certain thematic area based on the macro-regional action plan.

macro-regional strategies represent an added value for the EU territorial cooperation, was asked in the evaluation. It was expected to be answered in a positive way.

Against this background, the paper contributes to a further understanding of macro-regional strategies in general. The paper scrutinizes the evaluation procedure and the output critically. It investigates the context of the evaluation: Who evaluated what, why and how? What was their (hidden) agenda? The paper is structured into four parts. The second part presents background to evaluation theory (2). (3) Thereafter, theoretical concepts and criteria will be applied for the assessment of the EC's evaluation documents. (4) The concluding remarks summarize the results and propose some recommendations for future evaluations.

Background: Evaluation in theory

The term "evaluation" has increasingly been used in various contexts in the past few years. This led to a fuzzy understanding of the term and its application in the everyday life world. Therefore, recent publications focus on purposes of evaluations in different contexts (see e.g. Shaw et al. 2006). Based on literature published in the 80s and 90s as well as on the edited book by Sedlacek (2004) this section presents eight elements and criteria of an evaluation: Who, aim, methods, objects, stage, scope, functions and the role of the moderator.

Three questions are important for an evaluation or its assessment:

1. *Who* evaluates?
2. *What* is being evaluated?
3. *How* is evaluated?

In theory, evaluations are divided into *internal* and *external* evaluations. These two different types fulfill diverse *aims*. An internal evaluation in contrast to an external evaluation is usually to a lesser extent neutral but available at a lower cost. One of the key elements for conducting a good evaluation is to define clearly *what* exactly is being evaluated and what is the interest in conducting an evaluation. The aim of an evaluation is crucial and closely linked to the object of research, which then needs clear delineation (Sedlacek 2004). The object can be programs, projects, instruments or measures. A prominent example is evaluating with regard to performance indicators, either through internal or external evaluation. The kind of methods used for conduction and interpretation also influence the results substantially. Ideally, an evaluation is based on a mixed-method design that includes quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The quantitative approach guarantees representative data. The qualitative one helps to prepare the quantitative questionnaire, but also to understand the complexity of an issue in detail (see Behnke, Baur, Behnke 2010, Kromrey 2009). Due to money and time constraints, many evaluations carried out rely on one method.

Many different definitions of 'evaluation' can be found in literature. In this paper, the following definition will be applied: An evaluation „is the systematic assessment of the **use or value of an object**. Such objects can be e.g. programs, projects, products, measures, policies, technologies, organizations or research. Professional evaluation **aims at a comprehensible assessment of value/measurement/weighting of the**

object in order to determine the use and the excellence“ (DeGEval 2002)-“
(DeGEval 2002 cited in Sedlacek 2004, p. 12-13, own translation)

The common ground of all definitions and types of evaluations are the following elements: It is a *systematic* assessment of the use and value of an object or a concept.

The types of evaluations differ (1) in terms of the time of conduction. It can be conducted before implementation (ex-ante), as an accompanying evaluation or after the completion of a program or project (ex-post). The (2) scope of evaluation is another aspect that can vary between diverse approaches. The four main once are probably the surveillance of enforcement, of effects, of target achievement and of efficiency. Table 1 suggests that during different stages of evaluation, depending on the object, the scope of evaluation is different. Nevertheless, some aims are in practical more typical than others. An ex-ante evaluation favours the evaluation of the aim or input of a program or project, whereas an accompanying or ex-post evaluation are more likely to focus on performance indicators of the program or the results.

Table 1: Objective, stages of evaluation and their aims

Object	Stage of Evaluation			
		ex-ante	Accompanying	ex-post
	Program	aim context input	process accompanying	analysis of results control of results
	project/ measure	input project	accompanying on-going monitoring controlling	analysis of results control of results

(own illustration based on Sedlacek 2004, 15)

Apart from these elements that describe the evaluation process itself, the *function* of this process is an important element. The *function* refers to what the outcome of the evaluation will be used for and differs from the *aim*. Stockmann (2004) distinguishes four functions of an evaluation:

- understanding
- control
- dialogue
- legitimacy

The purpose of an evaluation is very important to take into account when assessing an evaluation as it puts the outcomes, the methods etc. in relation to what was aimed for. Generally, an evaluation includes to some extent all four functions, though one of them is often the main purpose. However, the evaluator's task is always to moderate

(hidden) discourses between the contracting authority, the regional stakeholders and the evaluation.

Assessing the European Commission's evaluation

In this part, the Commission's evaluation will be reviewed by applying the debated theoretical evaluation concepts and criteria. Moreover, the background for the information derives from an extensive primary document analysis of official documents (e.g. reports of the steering groups 2012 and 2013), interviews and numerous background discussions of the two authors with EUSDR stakeholders from 2011 until 2013 as well as the attendance at EUSDR events and a literature review. The analysis is primarily based on the evaluation documents from the European Commission (2013a) and European Commission (2013b). The different elements of an evaluation introduced above (elements object, stage, scope, who, role, aim, content, methods and function, see table 2), are now described and discussed in more detail with regard to the Commissions evaluation.

Table 2: Application of the evaluation concepts and criteria to the case of the EC's evaluation of macro-regional strategies (MRS)

Levels of evaluation	Evaluation of macro-regional strategies
1. Object	Macro-regional strategies
2. Stage of evaluation	(Restrained) ex-post
3. Scope of evaluation	Analysis of results (added value of macro-regional strategies) and monitoring of efficiency (their costs and benefits)
Clarification	Evaluation of macro-regional strategies
Who	Internal evaluation with external elements: European Commission including assessments of four external experts
Role of the evaluator European Commission	Central actor of macro-regional strategies in various phases: conception, implementation (e.g. strategic leadership, support to key actors, mediator, key event management) and evaluation
Function of the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the concept • Control of efficiency and effects of macro-regional strategies • Dialog of stakeholders within and between macro-regions • Legitimacy for development of further strategies
Aim of the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of the concept macro-regional strategies • Analysis of their added value Recommendations for future work

What (content)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macro-regional actions, measures, projects and networks • Macro-regional governance structures • Impact on regional, national and European policies • Funding opportunities of macro-regional measures and projects, including synergies with existing programs ...
Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quantitative stakeholder survey 2. External expert assessments 3. Literature review 4. Reports of the EC and Council on macro-regional strategies

(own illustration)

The Commission's evaluation assessed the new EU political concept "macro-regional strategy" and the implementation of the first adopted ones (*object of evaluation*). An action plan has been developed under the auspices of the EC with stakeholders from the participating countries (e.g. public online consultations, stakeholder conferences) for the two regions. Therefore, the progress of implementation of the action plans were central elements to the evaluation. Theoretically, the "macro-regional strategy" displays a coherent evaluation object. The scope of the evaluation can only take into account the first activities, which contrasts with the long-term approach of macro-regional strategies.

The evaluation took place four years after the adoption of the first macro-regional strategy – the EUBSR – and two years after the second one – the EUSDR. The implementation of these macro-regional strategies are still ongoing and thus incomplete. Therefore, it was a restrained ex-post evaluation (*stage of evaluation*), which may allow to development recommendations for amendments. The Alpine and the Adriatic-Ionian strategy, which were already in the process of development, could benefit from the mid-term results. The point in time chosen predefined what was subject to evaluation. For example, elements of the governance structure were evaluated, though not in detail. Long-term goals such as the alignment of funding or policies were included in the process but lacked concrete statements. The evaluation explored two main issues (*scope of evaluation*):

1. Analysis of results: Do macro-regional strategies have an added value?
2. Monitoring of efficiency: What are the costs and benefits of macro-regional strategies? The topics will be discussed in detail in other sections.

Due to the European Commission, conceptualizing the evaluation and carrying it out, the evaluation can be categorized as an internal evaluation, which through the involvement of experts includes a few external elements. The internal character of this evaluation (who evaluated whom?) is crucial, as criticism that arose often was based upon the expectation that the evaluation would need to stand up to the criteria of a neutral and external evaluation process.

The Commission assigned four external experts for an assessment from their disciplinary point of view (*who*). In a recent published report, the European Commission described its own role within the framework of macro-regional strategies:

„The current system relies heavily on the European Commission for strategic leadership. The Commission ensures momentum, mediates in stalemates, and organises key events. It gives support to key actors, and is central to reporting and evaluation. The Commission is also a key facilitator, and guarantor of the EU dimension.“ (European Commission 2014, 284 final: 4)

Therefore, the European Commission, not representing a neutral contractor, was involved in various roles in the process (*role of the evaluator*). The Commission was as well subject to evaluation as also the evaluator itself. From a theoretical point of view, this comes alongside with the risk to neglect certain criticism due to possible lack of neutral distance. The advantage is however, that the procedures and structures are well known and can be analyzed in-depth.

The external experts produced independent reports from their disciplinary point of view. Hence, their conclusions differed and even were partially contradictory⁴. All papers include “drivers”⁵, results with regard to the added value and recommendations for future work. Further, the experts’ analysis were based on documents, e.g. some include the annual reports of the Priority Area Coordinators of macro-regional strategies. The survey, which was part of the process, was not included in the experts assessments.

The evaluation intended to clarify the concept of macro-regional strategies, to analyze its EU added value and to develop political recommendation’s for existing and future (*aims of evaluation*). Indeed, there was an urgent need for more clarification of the macro-regional concept. As we argue, the report contributed to this aim. The second aim to investigate the added value of the concept ascribes positive impact of macro-regional strategies in advance offering numerous of possible outcomes. Therefore, the goal of the evaluation was rather broad. The evaluation itself was not based upon predefined indicators neither for the macro-regional concept in general nor for different regions. The development of indicators for hard and soft factors could have offered a value in itself. From our perspective, two different levels are important for evaluation aims: 1) since the macro-regional concept is new, the lack of a common understanding of the macro-regional governance lead to uncertainties. The negotiation between various stakeholders over the different functions is a time consuming process, which according to several stakeholders could have been considered in the evaluation design in more detail. 2) The different stages of institutionalization of relations between stakeholders is further an important aspect for efficient processes within the macro-regional framework.

The evaluation broadly analyzed the following aspects of macro-regional strategies (*what/content*):

⁴ For example, Agnes Kelemen recommends focusing on environmental issues but Stefanie Dühr suggests concentrating on issues of transnational relevance. Indeed, macro-regional strategies could target environmental and transnational measures, but transnational relevant activities involve also e.g. infrastructure (see Kelemen 2013, Dühr 2013).

⁵ The detailed understanding of these „drivers“ by the authors seemed to differ.

- Actions, measures, projects and networks
- Governance structures
- Impact of MRS on regional, national and European policies
- Funding opportunities of MRS measures and projects, including synergies with existing programs

The *methods* of evaluation include analysis of EU reports, stakeholder survey, assessments of external experts and literature review (see COM (2013) 468 final: 3). The survey's questions refer to overall concepts, such as multi-level governance, without introducing the theoretical debate behind. The survey questions focused on long-term developments, such as the impact of macro-regional strategies on policies, which were limited at this stage. Each empirical study has its inherent biases due to the methodology applied, which need to be taken in account within the data analysis process (e.g. who did not reply to the questionnaire?). Since research on macro-regional strategies has only recently developed, authors rarely published in established journals that are also available by a broader community, and are often part of small community discussions in social sciences (e.g. from this network Ágh/Kaiser/Koller 2010, 2011, Etzhold/Gänzle 2012, Gänzle/Kern 2012, Gänzle/Schneider 2013, Sielker 2012, but also many others).

The evaluation certainly achieved the four functions of an evaluation: First, the report supported the understanding of the concept. Second, the efficiency and the effects of current activities are described and questioned. Third, a dialogue was created between stakeholders. Fourth, legitimacy for the development of further strategies was provided.

Concluding remarks and recommendations for practitioners

Summarising, the evaluation was designed as an (restrained) ex-post evaluation that helped to clarify a common understanding of the macro-regional concept. Even if not all stakeholders agree or claim shortcomings of the description, the evaluation has helped create a dialogue between stakeholders on what they expect from macro-regional strategies. On the one hand, the Commission intended to clarify the concept by means of evaluation for their own communication. On the other hand the evaluation provides guidance to the wider public. Although many stakeholders claimed that few stakeholders were involved in the process, we argue that the discussions triggered by the evaluation are an important development that does lead to a public debate about the macro-regional concept. In our opinion, it is important that the Commission makes a more detailed statement on their view on macro-regions in this evaluation report. The evaluation process can be seen as an invitation to all stakeholders to define this concept further. One important function of this process is the legitimization for the further development of macro-regions provided with this evaluation. The macro-regional concept is diffuse and therefore critically observed inside the Commission. Based on this evaluation the Directorate General for Regional Policy, putting forward this report, thus also of justified its own commitment within the Commission. In the last years, the Commission has always underlined to wait for the evaluation of the two pilot regions before dedicating more

resources towards them. With the evaluation now the future role of macro-regions on the EU-level has clearly been stated.

- The Commissions's evaluation demonstrated that macro-regional strategies are a new, valuable form of European cooperation. However, since macro-regional strategies are a rather long-term "investments", an in-depth evaluation of certain aspects after this relatively short implementation period is difficult. From an academic perspective, and taking into account the general expectations of stakeholders within the regions, the evaluation had several deficits: 1) the central evaluation question for the "added value" of these strategies had a normative implication. 2) The early date of evaluation did not match with the subjects of evaluation (e.g. policy impact). 3) The development of indicators for hard and soft factors could have offered a value in itself, including short- and long-term goals and impacts. 4) The methods employed to analyse the information and the survey have not been published. The literature analysed mainly focuses on English journals and to little extent included the literature published within the national contexts. 5) The EC obtained several roles within the evaluation: contractor, subject to evaluation, evaluator leading to the risk of limited neutrality. Nevertheless the evaluation functioned as intended: it contributed to the clarification of the concept, supported the dialog between stakeholders, legitimized the adoption of further strategies and to some extent measured the progress of implementation within the Danube and Baltic Sea Region.

In future evaluation processes, and depending on the aims of the evaluation, two considerations could be made. First, the organization of the process could be discussed, e.g. an interdisciplinary team could be contracted to act as the evaluator. This would avoid criticism as raised in the aftermath of this evaluation. Second, the evaluation design, could consider some of the aspects raised above, e.g. a question without normative implications or the inclusion of a wider public in a transparent manner. From our perspective, these aspects would allow even more valuable in-depth analysis that could be useful for the preparation of further strategies but also for the progress of the existing ones. The paper at hand offered an analysis of the evaluation process, thereby showing that much critic mentioned arose due to different expectations towards the evaluation. Future processes of evaluation, thus could avoid criticism if the goals and aims are presented as such.

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Danube identity in reflection to the emerging new narrative in the EU

Boglarka Koller, National University of Public Service, Faculty of International and European Studies, Budapest

Introduction

The project of the common Europe has recently arrived to a turning point. The European Union has been experiencing effect of a multiple-crisis, effects of an economic/monetary, institutional and a legitimacy/identity crisis (Arató-Koller, 2015). An increasing majority of the EU citizens feel that the EU is mostly dealing with non-salient issues that are far away from their everyday problems. The trust/distrust ratio in the EU in general is lowest ever in history of the EU integration.⁶

In this position paper, the EUSDR is considered as a new territorial manifestation of the so called differentiated integration (Koller, 2011c), which means that in line with the increasing number of member states in the EU and the more complex outer relationship with non-members, overlapping layers of integration processes and multi-perspectival polities (Ruggie 1993, Gary 1999) emerge. It is further demonstrated that as a result of the learning outcomes of the crisis management, the level of distrust in the EU markets and institutions has been increased in general and led to undermining the legitimacy of the “Community method” and more frequently lead to differentiated solutions. Nevertheless a new narrative has been emerging in Europe recently that could lead to the reinvention of the elements of the common European identity. Functional macro-regions as new territorial units can contribute to develop this new narrative.

Spread of Differentiation and getting closer to EU citizens?

The European integration today resembles an onion, which is ‘a visualization of governance in Europe segmented not only by policy areas and levels of government – as has been the conventional wisdom – but also by subgroups of European states.’ (De Neve 2007: 504) The European integration is becoming differentiated not only by decision-making levels and the various EU policies but also by various groups of member states; as a consequence it becomes differentiated territorially as well (Ehlermann, 1995, Stubb 1996, 1997, 2002; Kölliker 2001; Philippart and Edwards 1999; Tekin and Wessels 2008; Andersen and Sitter 2006; Dyson and Sepos 2010; Goetz, 2009, Gaisbauer, 2010, Spyros 2008, Arató 2002, Koller 2001a, 2011c, 2012, Zielonka 2001).

The spread of differentiated integration, which was introduced in the EU in the 1980s and was codified first in the Amsterdam Treaty with the declaration of the flexibility clause, went hand in hand with the introduction of another logic, namely the endeavour to bring the EU closer to its citizens and to emphasise the need of the bottom up processes. Due to the growing legitimacy crisis of the Community from the

⁶ See the results of Eurobarometer 79-83.

1980s, the EC made efforts to establish the structural and symbolic elements of the common European identity.

A double dynamic could be discovered in the development of European integration from the 1980s. While the European Union was experiencing an increasingly 'non unified' integration, groups of member states decided to take part only in some of the common 'policies' (In 1991 UK opted out from Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the Social Chapter, Denmark opted out from EMU and European citizenship, and Sweden decided not participating in the EMU etc.⁷). Parallel to this the European Union tried to get closer to its citizens with the establishment of European citizenship in the Maastricht Treaty or the proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights later in Nice in 2000⁸.

The inclusion of the newcomers proved to be a hard and long process in both the old members and the newly joined states. Nevertheless, the 2004 (plus 2007) enlargement marked a new era in integration. The European Union with differing interest of 28⁹ member states, became an exceptionally heterogeneous polity that became hardly manageable according to the old recipes and the ideas that stood behind the project of the common Europe. As a consequence, the multi-speed, or a la Carte Europe became widely accepted while territorial sub-groups emerged as answers to the 'too big EU challenge'. Furthermore, the need to foster bottom up processes and cooperation at the levels of individuals came to the fore.

To sum up, differentiated integration will determine the shape of the European Union in the future, since it fundamentally changes the meaning and the value of membership in the community. Differentiated integration is also a boundary issue. Forming a new club and delineating its boundaries also means including the joining members and excluding those who do not participate in a cooperation, therefore differentiated integration is also about defining "ins" and "outs" in relation to the club

Learning outcomes of the EU crisis management

Moreover, in the last three years, differentiation of the EU accelerated along the financial and economic crisis management process and the steps taken to save the euro. Starting with the European Semester¹⁰ in 2010, continuing with the Euro Plus

⁷ The Schengen zone or the Polish and UK opt-outs from the Charter of Fundamental Rights can be mentioned as further examples of differentiated integration.

⁸ It was officially proclaimed in Nice in 2000; however, it did not enter into force until the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009.

⁹ It became 28 with the accession of Croatia in 2013.

¹⁰ The "European Semester" is a cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination within the EU. See <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/special-reports/european-semester>.

Pact¹¹ and then the Sick Pack¹² in 2011 and later with the Two Pack¹³ in 2012 it became obvious that only a deepened economic and monetary integration can lead the European Union out from a long-term and severe economic and financial crisis. This, however, also requires a stronger commitment on the member states' side, i.e. a significant transfer of national sovereignty to the EU level. But, the member states of the Union are divided with respect to the extent they are willing to transfer more power to the EU institutions. The in 2012 signed and in January 2013 entered into force the Fiscal Compact, that introduced a balanced budget rule and an automatically triggered correction mechanism at the national level, thus aims to bring into life a more integrated budgetary framework. However, it was not welcomed happily by all members, for example the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic abstained from joining to it. Consequently, while it seems that the European Union is heading towards achieving the 'genuine economic and monetary union', there is a great level of discrepancy among the members what level of national sovereignty they are willing to pull to achieve this goal. Additionally, the crisis management in the euro-zone has proved that solidarity, and foremost financial solidarity is a subject of political bargaining. Therefore, an EU member state can never be assured that the other member states would help them out in case of financial problems. Moreover many of these decisions are taken in the European Council, where the heads of the states and governments are present, thus are dependent upon short-term political aspirations (Benczes 2011: 768). Or, as the example of the bail-out of Cyprus revealed, formerly untouched principles such as the principle of private property were left out of consideration as well. As an analyst rightly pointed out: 'The euro zone may cloak this bail-out in the language of fairness but it is a highly selective treatment.' (Economist, 16 March 2013)¹⁴

The questionable means used in crisis management contributed to increase the level of distrust in the EU markets and institutions in general that undermined the legitimacy of the 'Community method' and even more frequently lead to differentiated solutions.

¹¹ The "Euro Plus Pact" stipulates a range of quantitative targets meant to strengthen competitiveness and convergence with the ultimate aim of preventing unsustainable financial imbalances See European Council 24/25 March 2011, Conclusions, Brussels, 20 April 2011.

¹² The "Six Pack" includes Five Regulations and one Directive (that is why it is called six-pack); and does not only cover fiscal surveillance, but also macroeconomic surveillance under the new Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure. See http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/articles/governance/2012-03-14_six_pack_en.htm. The "Two Pack" includes two regulations that build on what has already been agreed in the "Six Pack" legislative measures. They strengthen the legal basis of the "European Semester" economic coordination process and enable the European Commission to get a clearer view of how Eurozone countries are working to meet the fiscal targets set by the EU Stability and Growth Pact. They also lay down much clearer procedures for dealing with countries that are in severe difficulties or are receiving an EU bailout. See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20130304BKG62046/html/Economic-governance-two-pack-background-note>.

¹³ The "Two Pack" includes two regulations that build on what has already been agreed in the "Six Pack" legislative measures. They strengthen the legal basis of the "European Semester" economic coordination process and enable the European Commission to get a clearer view of how Eurozone countries are working to meet the fiscal targets set by the EU Stability and Growth Pact. They also lay down much clearer procedures for dealing with countries that are in severe difficulties or are receiving an EU bailout. See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20130304BKG62046/html/Economic-governance-two-pack-background-note>.

¹⁴ The Cyprus bail-out. Unfair, short-sighted and self-defeating. The Economist. March 16 2013 <http://www.economist.com/blogs/schumpeter/2013/03/cyprus-bail-out>.

Increasing distrust in the EU

The attitude of European citizens towards the European Union has changed significantly in the last three years. While with the exception of the year 2003, until the autumn 2009, more people trusted the EU in general as opposed to those that distrusted it; from the spring, 2010 on those that did not trust the Union outnumbered the people that trusted the EU. Moreover, since then, in each surveyed period the majority of European citizens answered that they did not trust the Union, which is clear sign of the loss of credibility of the supranational political community.¹⁵

Emerging new narrative in Europe

The multiple crisis in Europe had not many, but one positive outcome though, namely that the politicians, decisions-makers and opinion-leaders have started again to talk about the so-called *finalité politique* again. The last visionary speech was extrapolated in the 2000 speech of Joschka Fischer¹⁶. The emergence of a new narrative has started with José Manuel Barroso's 'State of the Union 2012' in which it was emphasized that 'the credibility and sustainability of the Economic and Monetary Union depends on the institutions and the political construct behind it. This is why the Economic and Monetary Union raises the question of a political union and the European democracy that must underpin it'. (State of the Union address, José Manuel Barroso)

President Barroso initiated a public debate on the content of the new narrative as well and called artists, intellectuals, scientists, academics to explore the history, values, symbols and cultural aspects that unite citizens and formulate their own vision for Europe.¹⁷

Parallel to this, however, Euroscepticism has received a significant uplift all over European and a new anti-EU vision has been born Europe-wide.

If macro-regions considered to be 'regional building blocks for EU-wide policy' (European Commission, 2013) than they could contribute to provide valuable inputs for the common narrative and could help to counterbalance the negative messages of anti-EU sentiments. A macro-region with its 'place-based approach' (Barca 2009) aims to find the lost consent of people to the whole European project at various levels of their activity, including the national level, the regional level, the local level and even the level of the individuals.

Macro-regions as new territorial forms of differentiations - A new axis or a fragmentation line?

The functional macro-regions could be interpreted as new, territorial forms of differentiated integration. The establishment of the EUSDR can be viewed from two angles: On the one hand a new symbol, new axis of Europe which at the end

¹⁵ See the results of Eurobarometer 79-83.

¹⁶ See Joschka Fischer, Vom Staatenverbund zur Föderation – Gedanken über die Finalität der europäischen Integration Rede am 12. Mai 2000 in der Humboldt-Universität in Berlin. Auswärtiges Amt.

¹⁷ See Debate on the Future of Europe available at http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe/new-narrative/more_en.htm

contributes to the strengthening of the common Europe. On the other hand it can be viewed as a regional block, a sub-group in the European integration that could work against the unity of the EU and create a new fragmentation line on the map of the continent.

Reinventing the Danube as a common geographical reference point for people living in the close vicinity of the river, is a great idea. Mainly, because it does not follow the former (e.g. West-East) internal and external boundaries of Europe. Thus, it creates a possibility to forget the old mental barriers and the opportunity to build new bonds.

Among the countries of the EUSDR there are former Western-European countries (West-Germany, Austria), post-communist countries (Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine) and Balkan countries (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina). As far as the religions concerned: Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Islam religions are present at the area of the Danube. Using the religion as a key marker of the civilizations, we can even conclude that the Danube not only crosses the nations' and the EU's borders but also crosses the boundaries of the civilizations, in this case the border of the European civilization too (Huntington, 1996)

With regard to ethnic composition, there is an unparalleled diversity in this region, which already created and is still a source of tensions among the nationalities and the states. Some of the countries that are represented in the Danube region, can be considered as relatively young (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia) or brand new (Montenegro) entities, that were just completed or are in the process of completing their nation building process.

Similarly, to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea, participating in the EUSDR is not connected to full EU membership. Among the fourteen participating countries, there are six EU member states (old and new ones), countries that aspire to have EU membership and others which will cooperate with the EU in other forms, e.g. via the European Neighbourhood Policy. Despite interpreting the non-exclusivity and openness of the EUSDR as a positive development, it can have negative effects on the intensity of European identity as well.

The participation of non-EU members in EUSDR requires the re-definition and re-interpretation of the 'otherness' in the Danube valley. Formerly, the outer boundary of the EU provided quite a clear definition of who belonged to 'we' and who were characterised as 'the other'. To date, with differentiated integration and the establishment of macro-regions, the concept of otherness became more elusive. In the EUSDR, EU member states, candidates countries, non-members, strategic partners participate, which has the consequence that the definition of otherness becomes more differentiated too. For example, it can occur that the membership in EUSDR is going to be evaluated according to the status of a participating country. It can be more precious in case of a candidate country and less valuable in case of a full member of the EU or on the contrary. Those that are not yet members of EU could regard the EUSDR as a step towards getting closer to the Union.

Prospects and means for establishing the Danube-valley identity

As it is stressed in the report of the European Commission (2013), there are three essential elements for a macro-regional cooperation: First, the existence of a 'regional sense of identity' second, the 'wish for common strategic planning' and third 'the willingness to pool resources'.

It can be argued that the projects initiated and developed in the frames of the EUSDR could only be successful if people's mind is going to undergo a change and individuals of the region start to develop the so called 'Danube consciousness', a set of identity elements, which describe their attachment to the territory of the river and also their solidarity towards the people living in the environs of the Danube. Otherwise, the pursuits made under the EUSDR will only remain manifestations of the concepts of European and national elites and the objectives set only remain elements of a prestigious wishing list (Koller 2010).

From the eleven declared priority areas, directly or indirectly all could be relevant for fostering Danube-valley identity formation. The first one, mobility including both the waterways coordinated by Austria and Romania as well as the rail-road-air mobility and intermodality coordinated by Slovenia and Serbia could directly contribute to strengthen the belonging to the common geographical unit and thus contribute to Danube valley identity building. According to the results of the Eurobarometer polls, the EU is identified with free movement of persons on the first place, which concerns travelling, studying and living in another member state. Thus, mobility is the most important positive outcome of EU membership for the majority of EU citizens.¹⁸ The new Danube axis together with the Rhine–Main–Danube waterway could be a great manifestation of this mobility, connecting the Black Forest with the Black Sea.

The third priority area coordinated by Bulgaria and Romania: culture and tourism in which the aim is to promote people to people contact could also be highly relevant. Tourism is a catalyst for identity-building. Getting to know each other, including the ceremonies, folk traditions, myths, history of the others is a personal experience, therefore can contribute to destroy preconceptions and establish new stereotypes. The World heritage sites, the castles, towers and forts at the river bank are suitable points of references to rediscover and to be branded as part of the 'Danube consciousness'.

It is a platitude, but there is an unparalleled diversity of cultures in the Danube region. Thus, the cultural politics of the EUSDR should not aim at homogenising the existing cultural elements at any level - which would be otherwise impossible - but identifying a layer of the cultural identities which can be accepted by the majority of the population living here. Common festivals, exhibitions, concerts, performances and sport events all can contribute to enhance intercultural dialogue and intersocial exchanges in the region.

The seventh priority area coordinated by Slovakia and Serbia that aims to foster the emergence of a knowledge based society and thus supports common research, education and innovation projects could also have a direct effect on Danube-valley

¹⁸ See the results of Eurobarometer 79-83.

identity formation. Education is a catalyst of collective identity-building process, covering various aspects. Probably, the pupils of the fourteen participating states do not possess extensive knowledge about the past of the other countries and therefore they often do not see their histories interconnected. Introducing the 'Danube dimension' in the secondary school history teaching for example could be a first step towards this identity construction. In higher education and research sector, the already existing network of academia should be revived. Both student and teacher mobility is a key issue. In the similar way, the ninth priority area coordinated by Austria and Moldova, which aims to support an increased invest in people and skills, could also deliver positive and tangible outcomes for the EU citizens living in the macro-region and in that way increase 'Danube consciousness'.

The too big institutions and the too complex and hierarchical social structures are not suitable to influence identity-formation, because individuals being in distance from these structures are not responsive to the programs and initiatives coming from 'above'. (Koller, 2013) The Danube identity building programmes therefore have to be close enough to the individuals. Thus, the British economist's, E.F. Schumacher's thesis 'Small and beautiful" (Schumacher 1973) can be perfectly applied for the situation.

Here, it should be mentioned that the EUSDR is still very intergovernmental in nature. The organisations and opinion leaders of the civil society are underrepresented in the process. Because of the bottom-up logic, that this strategy aims to put into practice, it is highly deplorable. The actions and projects initiated by the civil society should be the building stones of the realization of the strategy (Foster Europe Position Paper 2010).

Not every period in one's lifetime is equally good for forming identities either. (Koller, 2006) The younger generations can be more affected than the older people. Personal experience plays a crucial role. (Koller, 2013) Travelling to a new country, participating in a sport event or studying and living in another country can completely change our thinking about the others and therefore can contribute to establishing a new identity for ourselves as well. Consequently, Danube identity-building programs have to target the youth, because this is the age when the people are most susceptible to new messages.

Last but not least, among the means establishing the Danube-valley identity, the role of the media should be emphasized. Referring back to Anderson's thesis (Anderson 1991), currently journalists, reporters, editors and also internet bloggers are the key figures of communication, as they interpret and broadcast the everyday happenings to the mass of the population. In establishing and fostering the Danube identity, involvement of media is therefore a necessity.

Conclusions

The functional macro-regions are new, territorial forms of differentiated integration. The forming of functional macro-regions affects the collective identities of individuals in the European Union. If the Danube-valley identity building programs are successful, a new regional identity can be established. Success or failure of the initiative depends, whether the macro-region truly becomes 'functional', in other words depends on the

implementation of the EUSDR. The strong symbolism linked to the river Danube and its clear connection with the national histories can help to create this identity, which is not expected to replace any other attachments of the citizens of the region just to become a new layer, an additional element in their complex net of collective identities. If it is achieved it can provide valuable inputs to the emerging new narrative in Europe.

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Part 2: Reflecting Danube Region Experiences

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region in the Republic of Moldova: What are the challenges and chances?

Andrei Iovu, Researcher at the Institute for Public Policy, Former National Advisor on the Danube Strategy in the Republic of Moldova

Introduction

The present study discusses main challenges of participation in the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region encountered by the Republic of Moldova. Main limitations faced by this country relate to the access and allocation of funds, coordination processes, and insufficient perception of this strategic initiative. The solutions proposed to these challenges include assistance to the national platform responsible for the implementation and coordination of the Strategy, development of efficient communication channels, and additional strategic guidance provided by the European Commission (EUSDR Communication Strategy, procedures for selecting projects, definition of mandate of the EUSDR governing bodies). The study concludes that the progression of the Republic of Moldova – EU relations will enhance the participation of this country in the Danube Strategy.

Context

The Republic of Moldova became part of the EUSDR in a moment when the European integration vector was proclaimed as a fundamental political goal. The provisions of the EUSDR reflected as well to a great extent the objectives formulated by the Government of the Republic of Moldova, namely:

- Adopting and promoting European values and standards;
- Strengthening bilateral relations with EU and the states in the region;
- Ensuring energy security;
- Protecting the environment;
- Developing tourism;
- Straightening security;
- Connecting to the European transport networks.

For the coordination and implementation of the initiative, a working group that comprised representatives of the state agencies was set up. The group included representatives from the State Chancellery; Ministry of Regional Development and Constructions; Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Informational Technology and Communications; Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Labor, Social Protection, and Family; Academy of Science; Centre for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption; and the Tourism Agency. By the end of 2013, the inter-ministerial group is expected to include at least 4 additional institutions.

The activity of the inter-institutional working group mainly focused on the following aspects:

- Organization of informative events that aimed at informing the stakeholders about the EUSDR opportunities and perspectives.
- Development of an action plan for the implementation of the EUSDR in the Republic of Moldova. The action plan served as a document that helped guide the implementation of the Strategy.
- Communication and visibility events. A dedicated web platform (<http://groupspaces.com/SUERD>) was created for the EUSDR in the Republic of Moldova; regular press releases were issued; EUSDR web menus were incorporated in the web pages of the institutions participating in the working group.
- Participation in the EUSDR related events. Both the national coordinator, as well as the working group members participated in the main events pertaining to the Strategy (Annual Forums, inter-ministerial conferences, and Steering Group meetings).

Although one of the main rationales of the Strategy is to waive the existing disparities between the states in the region, the EUSDR as an EU policy targets primarily the member states of the Community and the ones that are in accession process. Among all the EUSDR states, the Republic of Moldova as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy is the farthest from EU from point of view of the institutional framework and political relations. This aspect influences significantly the dynamics of its participation and the range of opportunities that it can benefit from. The challenges of participation in this initiative are both conceptual and practical.

Main Challenges

Limited funding. The assessment of implementation and coordination of the EUSDR in the Republic of Moldova outlined that the issue related to the insufficient funds is the most stringent one. At this point the following two elements should be outlined:

- *Limited access to EU funds:* The EU assistance to the Republic of Moldova is structured within the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The assistance within this financial instrument is based on the ENP Action Plan. Therefore, Moldova has limited access to the EU programs and funds that would be available for the EUSDR projects and initiatives. In this sense, the organization of specific calls for projects that would involve the EU or national programs was not possible. This is one of the reasons why the implementation process has focused mainly on soft activities. The Republic of Moldova is not eligible for most of the EU programs aiming to facilitate the implementation of the EUSDR. In this sense, one of the financial rationales of the Strategy – to absorb the existing funds in the Danube Region – does not apply to the case of the Republic of Moldova.
- *Limited national funding:* The EUSDR requires the states to earmark budgets for this initiative. The Republic of Moldova as a developing country relies on the donor assistance and additional funds in this sense could not be allocated. The state budgetary funds are distributed based on the provisions of the national strategies and policies tailored for domestic development.

Challenges related to the coordination process. Main limitations related to the coordination process include the following two elements:

- *Inexistence of a Danube Strategy specialized department.* The efficient coordination of the EUSDR requires the existence of a specific department/division that would assist the NCP and would serve as a secretariat for the inter-institutional working group. The Moldovan NCP did not have an institutionalized unit that would support his activity. Short time assistance for the coordination of the Strategy was provided by the GIZ to the Ministry of Regional Development and Constructions. The support envisaged the employment of a national consultant and coverage of travel and accommodation costs to main EUSDR events. Nevertheless, after one year, the assistance on this component was ceased due to political instability that affected the allocation of the EU assistance.
- *NCPs fluctuation.* Since 2010, the national coordinator of the Danube Strategy in the Republic of Moldova has changed 4 times. At the beginning the coordination was assigned to the State Chancellery and then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration took over. Shortly after, the coordination was transmitted to the Ministry of Regional Development and Constructions. In 2013, due to political instability the national coordinator was changed again, but the coordination of the EUSDR remained within this ministry. Once the NCP changes the continuity of previous initiatives is poorly assured. Also, an additional period of time is required to familiarize the new NCP with the Strategy's complex policy and structure.

Challenges in communication. The coordination of the EUSDR at the national and macro-regional levels requires strategic approach and efficient channels of communication. Internally, the communication among institutions participating in the working group is difficult due to the high volume of information that needs to be exchanged. Also, scarcity of human resources and lack of efficient communication channels affect the quality of decision making and overall participation. Externally, the communication between EC, PACs, NCPs, Steering Group members and other stakeholders is truly challenging. This is mainly due to the high number of actors involved in this initiative, multidimensional governance of the EUSDR, inter-sectoral approach, and insufficient guidance from the EC.

EUSDR's soft perception. Although the EUSDR represents a complex initiative that envisages multimillion projects, the perceived advantages from it in the Republic of Moldova relate mainly to the need to align to EU initiatives. As an example, it is expected that a specific paragraph on the Danube Strategy will be outlined in the forthcoming Association Agreement between EU and Moldova. Nevertheless, the real advantages of the Danube Strategy are not fully perceived, because the "speech act" on the importance of the document is not sustained with clear political will (a small number of consistent projects include Moldova).

Conclusions and recommendations

- The progression of the **Republic of Moldova – EU relations will enhance the implementation of the EUSDR** and will increase the participation in the Danube Strategy projects and initiatives.
- With respect to the implementation of **the EUSDR**, setting specific **targets and flagship projects for the Danube Strategy** is both useful and helpful in providing a scope for the implementation process. Nevertheless, **in the context of the Republic of Moldova**, most of them **have limited application** because the connection with the EU institutions and states are impeded by:
 - 1) Limited access to the EU programs and funds;
 - 2) Reduced liability of the EU policies;
 - 3) EUSDR projects concern mainly the EU member states.
- Both **NCP and the inter-institutional working group** members **require assistance and support** in the context of their tasks within the Danube Strategy. The support would target the process of identification of the Danube Strategy project proposals, training on accessing EU funds, fundraising, networking events, visibility and communication.
- The institutions that are involved in the coordination and implementation of the EUSDR in the Republic of Moldova do not allocate funds for the participation of their representatives in the Strategy's events. **Given the importance of the Steering Group meetings, it is crucial to find sources to cover the travel and accommodation expenses.** These costs can be covered from the assistance of the European Commission for PACs. This practice was already successfully applied by some PACs (PA 1A, PA 7) and as a result the participation of the Moldovan representatives has significantly increased on those Priority Areas.
- The **EU delegation in the Republic of Moldova should increase its role in supporting the implementation and coordination of the EUSDR.** The assistance can include support for the national authorities to communicate the opportunities provided by the Danube Strategy to main stakeholders and assistance for the inter-institutional working group.
- In order to enhance the inter-institutional cooperation on specific projects, **it is necessary to encourage the Moldovan authorities to sign memoranda of understanding** with the line ministers of other Danube Strategy states. These documents will strengthen the cooperation on concrete initiatives and will set the bases for binding agreements.
- Although EC makes considerable efforts to illustrate the Strategy as macro-regional development hub, **some of the most fundamental ideas still remain unclear.** The national policy makers do not fully understand the role and importance of the Danube Strategy and perceive it mainly as a “soft” initiative. In this sense, it is recommended that EC will advocate for specific projects that will involve the Republic of Moldova and by this will illustrate the practical part of this strategic document.
- The coordination of the EUSDR in the Republic of Moldova stressed the **need for additional strategic/ guiding documents** at national and macro-regional levels:

- 1) *EUSDR Communication Strategy* – a document that would provide strategic guidance in establishing efficient communication channels for decision makers, stakeholders, policy makers, and broader public.
- 2) *Procedures for the inter-institutional working group and the Steering Groups* – the regulations should include mechanisms for selecting the EUSDR projects, accessing funding, organization of internal and external communication, etc.
- 3) *Mandate of EUSDR governing bodies* – the authority and responsibility of the PAC, NCP, Steering Groups, and other bodies should be delimited as this will help the implementation of the Strategy and will increase the accountability of the main governing actors.
- 4) *Recommendation letters* provided by the Steering Groups for the EUSDR projects should have a defined role. At this point, they do not guarantee funding or eligibility for specific programs. It is necessary to decide what advantages they bring to the project proposals that receive letters of recommendations (e.g. receipt of extra points when applying for EU programs).

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region – Does Ukraine have a chance?

Igor Studennikov, Centre for Regional Studies, Odessa

Introduction

Ukraine, a non-EU country involved in the EUSDR process, shares a significant part of the Danube-Carpathian Region. In terms of the current administrative-territorial division of Ukraine, the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region is formed by four oblasts (regions) – Odessa Oblast, Chernivetska Oblast, Ivano-Frankivska Oblast and Zakarpatska Oblast – occupying 68,100 sq km with a population of 5.9 million. In terms of a river basin approach and according to the methodology of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region is located in the sub-basins of the Danube Delta, the Prut and the Siret, and the Tisza River.

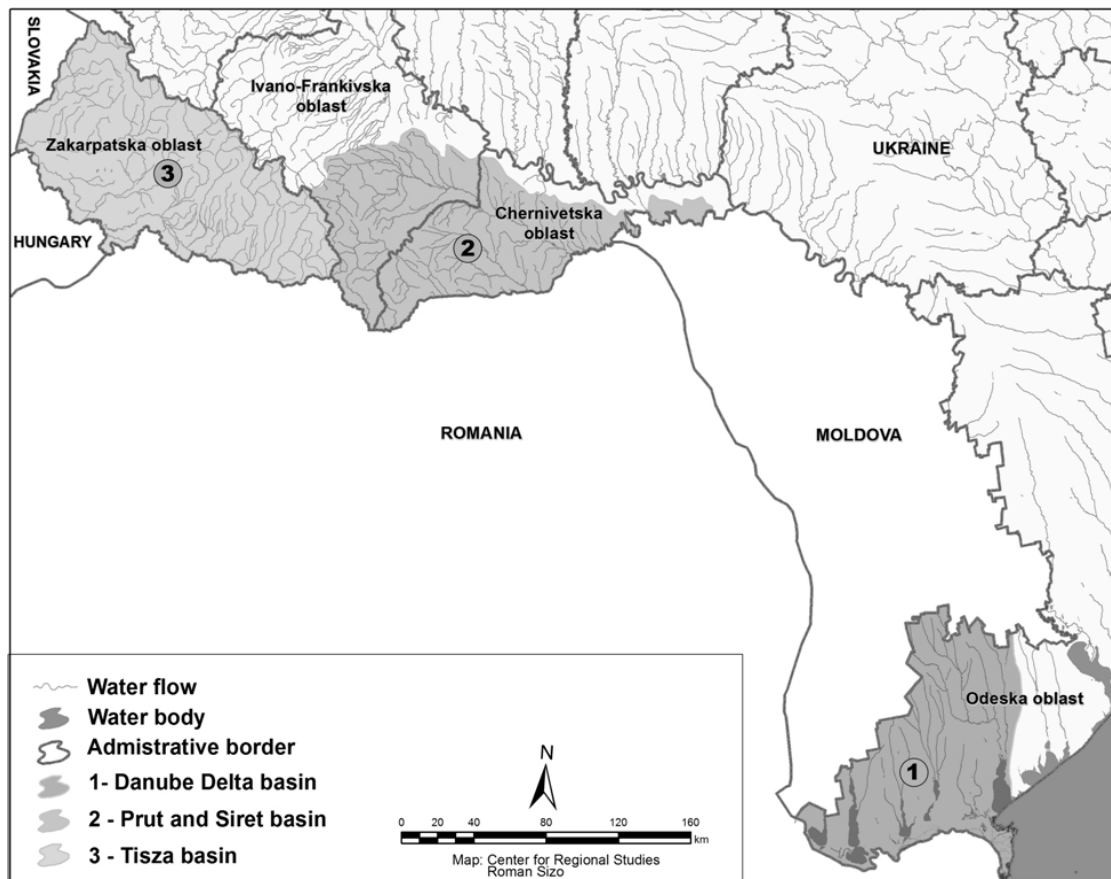


Figure 1: Ukraine in the Danube Region Strategy (Centre for Regional Studies)

Theoretically, in Ukraine the EU Strategy for the Danube Region is seen as a tool for sustainable development of areas belonging to the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region and a factor able to accelerate Ukraine's move towards the European integration. Nevertheless, since the beginning of the EUSDR process, Ukraine has never been an active player demonstrating more or less clear understandings of its

own expectations from the EUSDR. The annual forums of the Danube Strategy have indirectly shown that the EUSDR has little significance to the Ukrainian Government: Ukraine was not represented by high-ranking officials at the 2nd (Bucharest, Romania, October 2013) and the 3rd (Vienna, Austria, June 2014) annual forum of the EUSDR. Representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development and Housing, a Ukrainian central authority responsible for the coordination of Ukraine's involvement in the EUSDR, didn't participate in the 4th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region in Ulm, Germany, 29-30 October 2015.

At the same time, Ukraine is already closely involved in the implementation of some activities in the framework of the EUSDR. In particular, its involvement in some activities conducted in the framework of the EUSDR's Pillar B "Protecting the environment in the Danube Region" under the auspices of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) is quite essential. The Ukrainian presidency of the ICPDR in 2011 has shown Ukraine's ability to be an active player in the Danube basin when the government demonstrates political willingness to fulfil its international commitments.

The aim of this study has therefore been to develop an understanding of Ukraine's problems and opportunities influencing its attitude to and involvement in the implementation of the EUSDR.

Has the Government been doing enough to foster Ukraine's involvement in the Danube Strategy Process?

Ukraine is among 14 Danube countries, which have been invited by the European Commission to develop the EUSDR and to contribute to its Action Plan. To ensure that Ukraine is involved in the development of the Danube Strategy, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine created in 2010 a *cross-sectoral working group coordinated by the Ukrainian Ministry of Regional Development and Construction*. Due to a formal approach to the working group's creation, it involved only public officers and did not involve the scientific community and civil. No public consultations were undertaken. As a result, the 1st Ukrainian contribution submitted to the Commission on the 25th of May 2010 demonstrated poor quality. In response to this fault, an *independent working group on the basis of the Civic Expert Council of the Ukrainian part of the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Committee (CEC)* was established in April 2010 to ensure that Ukrainian civil society is involved in the development of an updated Ukrainian vision of the Danube Strategy. As a result of cooperation between this working group and the governmental cross-sectoral working group, the 2nd version of the *"Ukrainian vision of a future Danube Strategy"* closing the most glaring gaps and mistakes was developed and submitted to the Commission. The cooperation between both groups and the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction, which started to be successful, was broken up when this ministry was liquidated. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade was made responsible for the coordination of Ukraine's participation in the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan. On the 21st of September 2011 the *Coordination Centre for the Implementation of Activities Related to Ukraine's Involvement in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region* was established by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers.

In general, the problems which have been negatively affecting Ukraine's active involvement in the EUSDR implementation may be described as follows:

- the Ukrainian Government's formal attitude to Ukraine's involvement in the implementation of the EUSDR and the Action Plan;
- the lack of public awareness of the EUSDR and its potential role in achieving sustainable development, tackling poverty and improving peoples' quality of life in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region (this includes local authorities' poor understanding of these issues);
- poor collaboration between CSOs and local authorities in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region to achieve the objectives of the EUSDR and to implement the Action Plan;
- Ukrainian CSOs' poor integration into civil society's initiatives at the macro-regional level to support the implementation of the EUSDR and the Action Plan;
- the extreme limit of Ukrainian local authorities' funding opportunities to be really involved in the EUSDR and the Action Plan implementation. Partially, this is a result of the Ukrainian government's poor understanding and prioritisation of potential benefits from Ukraine's involvement in the implementation of the Strategy. Ukraine is the only country which has not expressed its interest in coordination of any priority area of EUSDR.

Ukrainian civil society and the Danube Strategy

Since the previous government of Ukraine has never been active in terms of Ukraine's involvement in the EUSDR, and the current government mainly focuses on the political and economic crisis, and Russia's invasion of the East of Ukraine, the Ukrainian civil society seems to be the only driving force of the EUSDR implementation in Ukraine now.

In addition to the steps mentioned above, from 2010 to 2012 several important activities were realized to foster Ukraine's involvement in the EUSDR's implementation. Over the years, two civil society's initiatives were implemented with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation: *Stimulating the participation of the Ukrainian public in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region* and *Activization of the public participation in the development of a National Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region*. Both projects were managed by the international public interest environmental law organization *Environment-People-Law* (EPL) based in Lviv. But the projects' expert team was mainly represented by members of the above mentioned *independent working group on the basis of the Civic Expert Council of the Ukrainian part of the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Committee* and involved independent researchers and analysts from all the regions making up the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region, and Kyiv. As outputs from the projects, the expert team produced and published the *Public Vision of Ukraine's Participation in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region* (2010) and *Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region: Analysis and Implementation Perspectives for Ukraine* (2012). The most important results of the actions have been the improved communication and cooperation with the Government, and raised public awareness of the Danube Strategy process and its potential benefits for the local community of the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region.

In late April 2012, the “Ministry of Economic Development and Trade” decided to develop a vision of the EUSDR implementation in Ukraine until the end of May 2012. This timeframe was not realistic to develop a good quality document without having sufficient human resources. In addition, it did not provide a space for public consultations to let the civil society and the independent expert community express their ideas and suggestions.

In response to the government’s unsuccessful attempt to produce a document that could suggest a political and methodological framework for the implementation of the Danube Strategy in Ukraine, in February 2013 a consortium of independent regional and local development agencies, led by the Centre for Regional Studies based in Odessa, have launched a project to strengthen the Ukrainian civil society’s involvement in the implementation of the EU Danube Strategy, and to promote dialogue between CSOs and the Ukrainian authorities responsible for the coordination of Ukraine’s involvement in the EUSDR implementation. This action titled *Strengthening Civil Society Involvement in Assisting the Government with the Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region* has been financially supported by the European Union. The development of a *Comprehensive vision of the EU Danube Strategy implementation in Ukraine* in cooperation with the Ukrainian Government has become one of the key activities in the framework of this project. In addition, the project’s important objectives are to *improve public policy literacy and lobbying capacities of Ukrainian CSOs* and to *promote dialogue between CSOs and Ukrainian public bodies responsible for Ukraine’s involvement in the EUSDR implementation*.

The government’s accountability, in broad terms, is seen as an important tool for stirring up both the central government and the local self-government bodies in the oblasts (regions) making up the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region. To achieve this, a *Public monitoring scheme for assessing the efficiency of Ukraine’s involvement in the implementation of the EUSDR* has been developed by EPL lawyers in the framework of this very project. Based on the Ukrainian current legislation, the Public monitoring scheme provides legal tools and procedures of making an enquiry to the government.

Just from the beginning of the Danube Strategy process, the Ukrainian civil society has been closely involved in the public consultations launched by the European Commission to collect views and suggestions on a future EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Generally, the Ukrainian civil society’s active participation in the EUSDR process and the mostly formal attitude of the Ukrainian government have been the feature of Ukraine’s involvement in the development and further implementation of the EUSDR. Therefore, the Ukrainian civil society’s interest and participation in the creation and activities of a *Danube Civil Society Forum (DCSF)* looks natural.

On 28 June 2010, in Eisenstadt, Austria, a position paper “*Danube Strategy and Civil Society Participation: Establishing a Structure for Civil Society Dialogue in the Danube Basin*” was adopted. Today the Danube Civil Society Forum plays an important role in civil society’s involvement in the Danube Strategy and serves as a neutral platform for promoting dialogue between the civil society and the government at the regional, national and EU level. The Danube Civil Society Forum’s leading role

in strengthening the civil society involvement in the Danube Strategy process and its efforts to bring the Ukrainian civil society closer to multi-level cooperation in the entire Danube Region made the decision on the creation of a *Ukrainian network of the Danube Civil Society Forum* completely reasonable. It has been established on 3 March 2014 at a launching meeting of Ukrainian CSOs held in Odessa and involves independent regional development agencies, think tanks, environmental NGOs, human rights organisations, representatives of scientific community.

The *Ukrainian network of the Danube Civil Society Forum* is a horizontal organisation acting with the purpose of joining efforts of Ukrainian CSOs to foster Ukraine's involvement in the implementation of the Danube Strategy, and to ensure efficient cooperation between the Ukrainian civil society and civil societies of other countries of the Danube River Basin in the framework of the EU Strategy of the Danube Region. By now, over 20 Ukrainian organisations have expressed their willingness to join the DCSF Ukrainian network.

Ukraine and the EUSDR: Challenges and Opportunities

The previous government's perception of the Danube Strategy was mainly based on the fact that the EUSDR did not provide any direct funding that may be used in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region to implement the projects approved by the *Coordination Centre for the Implementation of Activities Related to Ukraine's Involvement in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region*. In addition to this, the central government and the regional authorities of the 4 oblasts of the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region have been very disappointed with the severe struggle for funding and the mismanagement of EU funds allocated for cross-border programmes in the framework of the EU programming period 2007-2013. The *Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova* managed by the authority based in Romania appeared as the most scandalous due to its mismanagement and serious disparities in the distribution of funds between the countries involved. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the total amount allocated for the projects submitted by Ukrainian applicants and selected for funding under the programme priorities 1 and 2 was only 1.277.533 Euros (4.3%) of 30 million Euros, and under the programme priority 3 – 632.235 Euros of 5 million Euros available for the 1st call for proposals; Ukrainian applicants submitted 21 appeals to the programme's joint management authority in relation to the non-transparent and prejudiced evaluation procedure, and the incompetence demonstrated by the evaluation committee. The 2nd call for proposals in the framework of this programme has been seriously delayed, and now there is the risk of failure to execute the ongoing projects in time taking into consideration that any project extension is not provided for because of the end of the programming period 2007-2013.

At the same time, the Ukrainian central authorities have not demonstrated their real interest and high competence while negotiating Ukraine's access to EU funding. Ukraine practically missed opportunities for getting funding from the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme. It is a big question now if Ukraine will be able to benefit from the Danube Transnational Cooperation Programme 2014-2020.

Though the Danube Strategy process does not suggest quick solutions to the problems, which Ukraine is facing today, its deeper involvement in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region must be considered one of the strategic directions on Ukraine's way to the European integration.

Against a background of the global struggle for Ukraine that we observe now, important changes in bilateral relations between Ukraine and Romania should not be missed. The long period of tension between them has been eased through the last month. On 1st April 2014, the foreign ministers of Romania and Ukraine made a symbolic step – in Brussels before the NATO urgent meeting to consider the situation in Ukraine, they signed 'ad referendum' an agreement on local border traffic. The document requires further procedures to enter into force. But, politically, this step makes an important precondition for building more sustainable relations between local communities in the cross-border area shared between the countries. In terms of the Danube Strategy, it opens wider opportunities for strengthening inter-ethnic and inter-cultural links along the border, and may give renewed impetus to common initiatives in the field of infrastructure renovation, environmental protection and joint management of natural resources, emergency management, and maybe small-scale cross-border trade. We have to remember that Ukraine and Romania have already been involved in many joint initiatives in the Danube River basin, especially in the framework of the ICPDR. This positive turn in relations between these two countries sharing the Danube Delta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and water resources in the Lower Danube area and the Tisza River basin (together with Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia), may seriously encourage Ukraine to become a more active player in the Danube Strategy process.

But, definitely, if Ukraine really wants to benefit from its involvement in the Danube Strategy implementation, its government must have a clear understanding of both – country's priorities in the Danube Region, and its own resources which can be mobilised to make the EUSDR implementation in Ukraine effective.

As the first step towards changing the situation, the government has to revise its own methods of the coordination of Ukraine's involvement in the Danube Strategy. The analysis of the government Coordination Centre's activities has been done since its creation, demonstrates its little effectiveness due to, in my opinion, two reasons:

- The *Coordination Centre for the Implementation of Activities Related to Ukraine's Involvement in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region* involves mainly high officials of several Ukrainian ministries and regional administrations of the oblasts, which comprise the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region, who are not responsible directly for issues related to the Danube Strategy. Their awareness of the Danube Strategy process is quite poor. Their direct commitments and responsibilities leave too little time to be really involved in activities related to the Danube Strategy. In fact, the Coordination Centre is not active since February 2013.
- Cooperation between the government and civil society is still poor though some officials recognised the civil society's capacity to provide the government with good quality expertise in issues related to the EUSDR implementation in Ukraine, and to be an effective agent representing Ukraine's interests at the international level in the Danube Region.

The new situation requires a new approach. The government has to recognise that its own resources, first of all human, are insufficient for ensuring effective coordination of Ukraine's involvement in the Danube Strategy process. The government should delegate some authority to the civil society to represent Ukraine in coordination bodies of the Danube Strategy, first of all, in the EUSDR Priority Areas' coordination bodies. Sure, at the EUSDR political level Ukraine must be represented by high level officials. But day-to-day work has to be done by experts who have relevant knowledge and ability to communicate with the international expert community involved in the coordination of activities in the framework of the EUSDR Priority Areas. Moreover, Ukraine already has a good example of cooperation between the government and the independent expert community to ensure Ukraine's efficient involvement in the international activities in the Danube River basin under the *Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River* (Danube River Protection Convention/DRPC): at the political level, Ukraine is represented by a high ranking official – Ambassador at Large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine (until 2009 it was Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection); at the executive level (ICPDR Expert Groups), Ukraine is represented by experts recruited from universities and public and independent (non-governmental) research centres and institutions. The nomination procedure of national experts has been agreed between the ICPDR, an executive body of the *Danube River Protection Convention*, and the parties to the DRPC including Ukraine. This scheme of countries' involvement in the DRPC implementation has proved its efficiency throughout the ICPDR's life since it has been established 17 years ago, and it should be taken into consideration as a model to build up a coordination structure of Ukraine's closer involvement in the Danube Strategy process.

To ensure the Danube Strategy's efficient implementation in Ukraine, it is extremely important to build up horizontal cooperation between the four oblasts making up the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region. An important process has been launched in February 2015 – a creation of an Association of Local Self-Government Bodies of the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region in the Context of the EUSDR. A starting point of this process was the signature of a memorandum on cooperation in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region between the Odessa Regional Council and the Chernivtsy Regional Council. The Association is seen as a tool for closer involvement of local actors in the EUSDR and achieving a good balance between Ukraine's involvement in the EUSDR coordination at the central government level and real actors at the regional and local community level.

The current government's policy towards the decentralisation of the public administration system in Ukraine gives inspiration for passing wider rights and, at the same time, more responsibilities to the regional governments. It has to encourage regional authorities to search for any available resources that may be involved in fighting against the numerous problems the regions of Ukraine are facing today, especially under the circumstances of severe financial restrictions inside the country. For the four regions of the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region, the Danube Strategy may become now much more attractive as a means of promoting partnerships with regions of other Danube countries to involve their technical and, if possible, financial support, and to get EU funding available for the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region

in the framework of the EU programming period 2014-2020. The Ukrainian regions involved in the implementation of the Danube Strategy have also to consider common initiatives under the umbrella of the EUSDR like, for example, *“Multi Port Gateway Region Black Sea West”* promoted by the Transport and Navigation Working Group of the Working Community of the Danube Regions (ARGE DONAULÄNDER) – by now, the *Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of Cooperation between the Working Community of the Danube Regions, represented by the Country of Lower Austria (incl. Danube ports) with the Regions of the Western Black Sea and its Ports* has not yet been signed by any public and port authority of the Odessa Region, Ukraine.

In terms of geopolitics, Ukraine has to be interested in the Danube Strategy as a tool for its south-west closer integration into the European geopolitical space. The Ukrainian establishment needs an understanding of the Danube Strategy as an important cohesion instrument that may suggest real ways for closer economic integration taking into consideration that infrastructure, first of all transport, renovation is vital to revive regional and local economies in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region. To develop such an understanding, Ukrainian authorities, both central and regional, need to look at the Danube Strategy process from the point of view of Ukraine's own opportunities to be closer involved in it and to benefit from it, and opportunities provided for Ukraine by various actors in the framework of the EUSDR. As an important step towards this, a *Comprehensive vision of the EU Danube Strategy implementation in Ukraine* is under development now with the support from the EU. But the Danube Strategy has also to be taken into consideration while elaborating regional development strategies for the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region, first of all, regional development strategies until 2020 for the four oblasts, and a new comprehensive development programme for the Ukrainian Lower Danube Region (part of the Odessa Region between the Danube and the Dniester River and the Dniester Liman/Estuary). The latter has been initiated by the previous government and now suspended because of the recent political changes. But it opens an opportunity for developing a really sound document considering the Danube Strategy too.

Afterward

The writing of this article has been started in early November 2013, when the course of Ukraine's contemporary history seemed to many observers clear and predictable: the European Union and Ukraine were about to sign an Association Agreement at the Third Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius at the end of November 2013; pro-European part of the Ukrainian society, which has never supported Yanukovych and his regime, was ready to collaborate with the government even recognising its corrupt nature, but being hopeful that the Association Agreement and trade pact would provide tangible mechanisms of integration with the EU and reforms inside Ukraine. Even though the significant pro-Russian part of the Ukrainian society has never supported Ukraine's move towards the European integration (but never openly protesting against it), the feeling was as Ukraine made its civilization choice. The last-minute refusal of President Yanukovych to sign the Association Agreement and the further dramatic events in Ukraine have changed the country within very short time providing groundwork for genuine reforms of political, public administration, judicial

and economic systems of Ukraine. But the recent changes in Ukraine brought the country into a deeper involvement into Samuel Huntington's "*principal conflicts of global politics occurring between nations and groups of different civilizations*". Living on the fault line between Huntington's Western and Slavic civilizations, Ukraine is sharply pressed by Russia's President Vladimir Putin to become part of his geopolitical project as Putin's perception, according to John Lloyd of the Reuters Institute at the University of Oxford, is "*For a Slavic-Orthodox state to shift to the West would not be a choice, but a betrayal of the bloc's essence*". In 1997 Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote that **"without Ukraine Russia ceases to be empire, while with Ukraine – bought off first and subdued afterwards, it automatically turns into empire..."** This paradigm, which suggests that Ukraine is the Western outpost to prevent the recreation of the Soviet Union, is very popular in the West and widely accepted in Ukraine. "*The irony is that for now, Ukraine probably has more to gain economically from closer ties to the east than the west, even if the reputational benefit of being linked to the EU might help them in the long run. Ukraine is the breadbasket of central Europe, but the EU's scheme of agricultural subsidies means that there isn't a lot of room for Ukrainian food exports*", writes Julia Gray of the University of Pennsylvania. Since Ukraine's society is split into those who traditionally regard Russia as their closest and friendliest neighbor, and those who understand that Russia does not suggest anything different from that Ukraine has been experiencing over the two last decades, it is extremely important to show that the move towards the West is really beneficial for ordinary Ukrainians.

When I started writing this article, my thoughts were mainly about Ukraine's ability to understand its potential benefits from the Danube Strategy as a geopolitical project covering a big area of the European continent and connecting EU and non-EU countries. The article name, comprising the question "Does Ukraine have a chance?", has been reflecting my own approach to Ukraine's involvement in the Danube Strategy process that has been mostly seen as an opportunity for Ukraine which it should not miss. Under the new circumstances, this question should also be understood as does the EU really gives Ukraine a chance to improve people's well-being in its areas belonging to the Danube Region and to demonstrate in such a way that Ukraine's benefits of the Danube Strategy are more tangible than just "the reputational benefit of being linked to the EU"? Surely it requires certain steps on the side of Ukraine. And we, in Ukraine, have to remember about it and to ensure that the country and its government are not missing this opportunity again. But the EU has to ensure that the 2014-2020 funding schemes available for the four regions comprising the Ukrainian part of the Danube Region are transparent and well-managed, and a situation similar to the scandalous use of funds of the JOP Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013 will never be possible again.

And we also should remember that for many people in Ukraine, including its part belonging to the Danube Macro-Region, the question "What is Ukraine's association with the European Union for the EU political leadership – a means for improving the common people's well-being or pursuing the geopolitical mission of weakening Russia through the prevention of rapprochement between it and Ukraine?" is still open.

A critical assessment of the bottom-up actors' involvement in the EUSDR. Practical experiences from the Middle and Lower Danube

Gábor Schneider, SKL International, Stockholm

Introduction

This paper presents some first-hand empirical results about the involvement of stakeholders in the Middle and Lower Danube on the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). It describes some general characteristics of stakeholders with a special focus on local- and regional actors', civil society organisations' (CSOs), academia' – they all are defined as bottom-up stakeholders in this article - profile, capacities and expected roles in EUSDR.

The empirical base and research findings were collected in the frame of the Danube River Show project. The Danube River Show (DRS) was an event-series between 2012-2014 that had been established to promote local democracy and stronger participation in the Middle- and Lower Danube with double track aims. On one hand the DRS provided detailed information on the EUSDR from the perspectives of some bottom-up stakeholders such as the Council of Danube Cities and Regions, the Danube Civil Society Forum, European Danube Academy and the Danube Cultural Cluster. On the other hand, it was collecting information from the participants of DRS conferences about their expectations, involvement and their hindrance in EUSDR.

The paper is divided into three parts. First, it briefly introduces the research that has been carried out in the frame of the Danube River Show project. Second, it gives a short description of received results by focusing on three topics: (1) the profile of the stakeholders; (2) stakeholders' expectation of EUSDR; (3) stakeholders' operational experience and their most common hindrances. Third, after a short summary, the paper gives concluding remarks for the equitable and sustainable development of EUSDR.

Danube River Show (DRS) Project – Empirical research findings of stakeholders in Middle and Lower Danube

The novelty of DRS project was that international consultations were organised in sub- and regional centres in the Middle and Lower Danube. The chosen locations were regional centres for industry and service, with a population between 50,000 – 350,000. Furthermore, these centres are often cross border hinterlands with diverging capacities and opportunities comparing to the centres of national coordination of EUSDR (Budapest, Bratislava, Beograd, Bucharest and Sofia). As common features, they all are struggling with post-industrialization and lag far behind in economic development as compared to the EU average. As illustrative examples: the economic development of the chosen locations were between 25-65 % of the average of EU27¹⁹, the migration of young people is a substantial challenge, combined with high regional unemployment rates between 9.3 – 22 %.

¹⁹ Statistical data do not include Croatia, and data reflects results of 2009 and 2011, source EUROSTAT and own compilation.

This paper is based on the empirical results of four DRS conferences. Between March and July 2013 DRS conferences were held in Esztergom/Šturovo (Hungary - Slovakia), Novi Sad (Serbia), Smederevo (Serbia) and Ruse/Giurgiu (Bulgaria - Romania). The collected research data are based on questionnaires and executive summaries of thematic workshops. In numbers this means 176 completed questionnaires: 47 in Esztergom/Šturovo, 54 in Novi Sad, 25 in Smederevo and 50 in Ruse/Giurgiu and 12 executive summaries of thematic workshops (in every premise three thematic meetings on civil society, local- and regional administration and cultural cooperation).

In the data collection certain scope conditions were a challenge, as the size of the conferences were different, the knowledge on EUSDR was diverging. Furthermore, there were perceptible differences between the premises e.g Novi Sad had considerably stronger resources for organising the conference and invite participants than for example Smederevo.

In order to get comparable results the same type of questionnaire were used in all premises. The questionnaires were presented and all questions thoroughly explained to the audience in the plenary session of the conferences. Furthermore, the questionnaires were in all premises translated to the local language. As a result to these in all four premises the answer frequency was over 90%. Only fully completed questionnaires were taken into consideration, and in the evaluation a web-based statistical programme was used (See the questionnaire in ANNEX 1). Furthermore, in-depth information on DRS participants' profile, capacities and attitude towards EUSDR and their roles in previous international cooperation were collected through the outcomes of the DRS thematic workshops, which can be considered as special art of group interviews. In each DRS event there were three of this kind of workshops, attended by 5-15 participants and with a timeframe of 1,5 - 2 hours. Moderators of the thematic workshops made executive summaries on the happenings and the results²⁰.

I see that the prime significance of DRS conferences was the setup of structures for regular dialogues and discussions. Such conferences with open discussions and the involvement of broad stakeholders were not at all a common procedure in the premises. In this respect DRS events could be considered as good starting point. The detailed assessment and comparison of the four premises is undertaken in the Danube River Show Progress Report (see Schneider et al, 2014).

Concrete findings: Three key aspects of the empirical research are selected and briefly introduced in this paper:

1. Which stakeholder groups are active in regional centres in the Middle and Lower Danube? What kind of profile and international relations do they have?
2. What kind of experience do these actors have in EUSDR? How do participants assess the rationale of the strategy, what do they expect from the strategy?

²⁰ Moderators had a guiding thematic for dialogues, but they had much freedom for leading their workshops.

3. How do participants assess the operation of EUSDR? What are the most common shortcomings and problems that hinder their participation in the strategy?

The profiles of the stakeholders

Participants of the DRS events fall into one of the following stakeholder groups: (1) representatives of state administration, (2) representatives of local and regional authorities (self-governments)²¹, (3) representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)²², (4) representatives of research institutes and academia, (5) representatives of the private sector, (6) representatives of media and (7) other representatives²³ (Schneider et al, 2014).

In order to better assess the profiles, capacities and resources of different stakeholder groups I have made a clear differentiation between representatives of the state administration and representatives of local- and regional self-government²⁴. Doing so I would like to introduce differences between state administration and local- and regional self-governments e.g. in accessibility to information and abilities for participating in the national implementation of EUSDR.

According to the comparative assessments, representatives of CSOs and representatives of local and regional authorities and delegates of the state administration are the most active stakeholder groups of the strategy as they showed the most activity and interest in EUSDR. Other stakeholder groups such as the private sector, academia or the media showed moderate interest and activity.

At the same time, the interests and activities were primarily driven by self-initiatives of the participants, organised forms of cooperation among stakeholders were loose. The outcomes of the thematic workshops underlined that and completed it that there was hardly any sign of horizontal co-operation between the stakeholders. Instead of that, competition and rivalry were common phenomena and the mutual trust between actors was often missing. Some typical and often emerging examples were the conflict of interest and competing behaviour between different state administration organisations; between the state administration and the local/regional self-governments. Participants mentioned as frequent problem the lack of information,

²¹ All institutions operated by the local and regional self-governments are included e.g. cultural institutes, museums.

²² That includes non-governmental organizations, non-partisan groups, interest groups

²³ Representatives of international organizations, representatives of the EU institutions, representatives of joint technical secretaries of EU ETC programmes.

²⁴ According to EUSDR documents the successful implementation of the strategy requires a multi-level governance structure (COM, 2010a, 2013a,b,c and GAC, 2013). In nutshell the strategy has a supranational level where mainly the European Commission but other EU institutions (e.g. the European Parliament and the Committee of Regions) have a facilitator and policy-guiding role. Participating states have a key role in the implementation and coordination of the strategy by using their administrative capacities both in vertical and horizontal aspects. That means that states coordinate the operation of state administration at national, regional and local level and simultaneously they promote the participation of local and regional self-governments and other bottom-up actors e.g. academia, CSOs etc. into the implementation of the strategy. However, macro-regional strategies loosely define the roles and responsibilities for the national coordination. Practically countries can self decide what kind of coordination mechanism do they set up; whether they are building up formalised structures or non-formalised ones; what forms of cooperation e.g. joint meetings, consultations, joint planning etc. do they apply.

however I would rather describe that as an asymmetry in the dissemination of information. That means that the info-communication is limited and only certain groups are approached. In this respect representatives of the state administration were equipped best with information on the proceedings of EUSDR, however, the seniority level was also an important factor.

Further differences were found in the profiles of stakeholders by a) the degree of international activities and participation in international network, b) the degree of experience in EU projects and the knowledge about EUSDR. The transnational relations and the active participation in international platforms and networks are considered as important fundamentals for macro-regional cooperation (see Kodric, 2011; Kern – Gänzle, 2013; EUSDR PA 10 report, 2015 etc.). However, according to my assessments the transnational relations of the stakeholders in the Middle and Lower Danube are in an early, “premature phase”. Although the given results indicate the growing importance of cross-border relations (see ANNEX 2) detailed analysis of the thematic workshops showed that international activities were mainly driven by personal contacts and in a loosely structured way. Principally CSOs and (regional) state administration are the ones that have established some transregional contacts beside the cross-border ones. In contrary to that local- and regional self-governments have difficulties – mainly based on their operational problems and under-resourced financial situation – for establishing transregional relations. Large cities e.g. Novi Sad could show stronger transregional relations with Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Germany and Romania, and the city was organizing and participating in different international networks and platforms.

The capacities of the stakeholders strongly determine their capabilities and opportunities which have a direct impact on their participation or non-participation in the strategy. This is very similar to the empirical findings in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), where capacities were decisive factors for the involvement or non-involvement of the actors in the EUSBSR (see Moretti 2013; HA Involve 2013). Furthermore, sufficient financial background, skilled staff and special expertise in sectorial policies²⁵ are further key important conditions for the involvement of stakeholders in the EUSDR (Schneider 2012).

I saw as a general problem in all premises – even in Novi Sad, Ruse or Esztergom – that cities had difficulties in actively participating in EU funded projects. This does not mean that there are no EU projects – further cross border plans for bicycle road or the promotion of common tourism strategy were presented – but regional centres have little influence on effecting the implementation of EUSDR. Although, the given results are not representative, they indicate that regional centres in the Middle and Lower Danube do not have much influence - on contrary, they have little room on shaping the national planning and implementation process of EUSDR. Projects and

²⁵ A clear correlation was found between the profiles and capacities of NGOs and their involvement in the implementation of EUSDR. Well-established NGOs that had been operating for a longer period of time were directly involved in the institutional structure of the strategy and they were participating in different working groups of the Priority Areas (Schneider 2012).

plans are centrally developed or initiated without any formal cooperation with the local and regional level.

The assessment and expectations of the EUSDR by the stakeholders

Another important sign of DRS events was that EUSDR had lost much of its attractiveness. When the conferences were held in 2013 there was a general apathy and tiredness perceptible by the participants towards EUSDR. Based on the assessments of the DRS project, it can be argued that the general knowledge on EUSDR had not been strengthened between 2011 and 2013. On the contrary, for many participants of the DRS EUSDR was a relatively new topic. Roughly 50 % of the participants of DRS events had previously attended any kind of event related to EUSDR (Schneider et al, 2014). Simultaneously to that a growing criticism and scepticism towards EUSDR could be observed. It was perceptible in all locations that the strategy had difficulties in “mobilising actors”. Respondents claimed that many actors had lost their interest in the strategy as they could not participate either in the planning/preparation process or in the actual implementation of the strategy. As further reasons the non-existing financial incentives and the insufficient provision of information were mentioned by the participants.

Despite all concerns and the fact that EUSDR was a relative new concept for many DRS participants, there was a strong support for the rationale of EUSDR. The received answers of the respondents underlined and they were in line with the positive results of the evaluation of the Commission on the rationale of macro-regional strategies (COM 2013a, b). Participants of the DRS events were strongly supporting the rationale of EUSDR. According to the assessments, there was a clear support for the EUSDR in all stakeholder groups, however with diverging results by stakeholder groups. Most critics towards EUSDR were CSOs and representatives of state administration gave the highest grades to the rationale of EUSDR. Respondents were asked to assess EUSDR in a 1 - 5 scale, where 5 was excellent and 1 was poor and by 176 answers in all 4 premises the average grades for the EUSDR was between 3.65 - 4.47 out of 5 (see ANNEX 3).

However, a clear linkage was missing between the aims of EUSDR and the challenges at local and regional level. Many participants mentioned that they could not link their regional aims to the general aims of EUSDR. Clear motivation and added values for cooperation were missing or not defined which would clearly address the aims and opportunities for cooperation for the different stakeholder groups. In other words what are the driving factors in hinterland regions for regional authorities, CSOs, academia etc. to take part in EUSDR, what structures exist for that etc. Participants mentioned very concrete actions such as the facilitation of new networking opportunities and the set up of thematic partnerships which they were especially missing. Furthermore, they clearly addressed that they would like to participate in international networks and projects in the frame of the strategy, however such opportunities were only available in very limited numbers at that time.

A further interesting finding of DRS conferences was that there was limited knowledge and moderate practical experience regarding the operation of EUSDR. For many participants of the DRS the following questions were unclear: “Who are the EUSDR

contact persons in your country? What roles do PACs and NCPs have". Furthermore, a large number of the participants did not have any experience in EU projects e.g. EU ETC programmes. Representatives of the state administration seemed to have the deepest knowledge about EUSDR. The knowledge of CSOs about EUDRS was diverging, as many CSOs knew little about EUSDR. Bureaucrats in key functions at local- and regional self-governments (e.g. political advisors, mayors, chiefs of the department etc..) seemed to have a fairly good knowledge of happenings in EUSDR, while other representatives of this group (administrators, desk officers) were lacking some general information.

Operational experience in EUSDR

Participants could not provide direct feedback about the operation of EUSDR as most of them were not involved in any projects related to the strategy. Therefore I could not assess any direct operational experience related to the implementation of EUSDR. Instead of that participants shared their own experience of non-transparent operation and "fuzzy implementation" of national grants and EU subsidies in the Middle and Lower Danube. Certainly, these stories provide some warning signs to the further implementation of EUSDR. At the same time, participants found EUSDR in general terms as a transparent strategy with clear aims and actions.

As concrete hindrances - that prevent stakeholders from participating in the strategy – financial, operational and capacity issues were mentioned. In the first place, the non-visible and under-resourced financial opportunities were mentioned by the majority of respondents. This means that there were no available resources at disposal for small-scale projects. Here, this paper would like to underline that this does not mean that there are no projects in the implementation phase of EUSDR. On the contrary, according to the Commission more than 400 projects have been identified and associated to EUSDR in a volume of 49 billion euro (COM 2013a,c; CoR 2013). However, these projects are most probably large scale projects, coordinated at national level. At the same time, these projects do rarely involve actors from regional centres, at least not from the premises that the DRS project approached. In the second place, attendees mentioned the weak information supply as regular hindrance followed by the lack of government support (Schneider et al, 2014). Respondents also mentioned some further hindrances which relate to their own capacity problems. These were e.g. the lack of partner seeking, insufficient project management capacities and some participants pointed out that they were lacking of well-trained staff.

Concluding remarks

This paper has assessed the profiles, expectations of different stakeholder groups in the Middle and Lower Danube. It is important to recall that the premises are frequently hinterland regions, often with serious operational difficulties and strong economic and social challenges. Furthermore, in 2013 - when the data collection was made – there were no EUSDR associated project directly linked to one of the four premises and there were no concrete operational experience of the stakeholders linked to the implementation of EUSDR. I believe that these aspects had strong impacts on the results.

However, there are some general features and tendencies:

- 1.) Although there was a strong support for the rationale of EUSDR, the attractiveness and mobilisation potential of the strategy was moderate and participants criticized the implementation process of EUSDR.
- 2.) The government structures were asymmetric – too much centrally driven. State administration had there a leading role in the implementation, but they often lacked the structures and tools to effectively fulfil their coordination tasks. Clear responsibilities and roles were often missing and the cooperation among different stakeholders was at a low level.
- 3.) Bottom-up stakeholders were loosely linked to EUSDR.
 - a. The dissemination of information was on non-regular base and only a few bottom-up stakeholders were approached. This was partly the reason of poorly existing/performing structures and the loose cooperation between stakeholders in the respective regions. The examined cases showed that the access to information is determined by position e.g. civil servants at high seniority level had more information on EUSDR than administrators in the same organisation etc..
 - b. Local and regional self-governments had little influence on shaping the national coordination e.g. regular consultations and dialogues were missing.
 - c. Regional and local issues, challenges could not be properly addressed and linked to the national plans for EUSDR.
- 4.) There were strong differences in resources and capacities among stakeholders. In general, representatives of state administration were best equipped which meant fairly good accessibility on information on the happenings in EUSDR and they had available resources for participating in transregional network and platforms. On contrary to that bottom-up stakeholders had quite diverging profiles with substantial differences in terms of capacity and expertise. Generally, local and regional self-governments had limited resources for involving other stakeholders to the strategy and fulfilling a coordination role at a local/regional level. Furthermore, based on their operational problems and severe financial situation their own participation and involvement in transnational platforms and networks were not properly secured.
- 5.) Many stakeholders did not have enough experience in EU projects and could not participate in international platforms.

As concluding remarks I would like to point out:

- Strengthening the national coordination structures of EUSDR in the countries of the Middle and Lower Danube has still its actuality. Although the build-up of (formalised) procedures for dialogues and communication has recently begun, this would require stronger capacities, clear responsibilities not just at national but at regional and local levels as well. Undoubtedly the leading role should henceforward state administration have, however with stronger initiatives for involving local and regional self-governments and CSOs into the coordination/implementation process. In this respect I think that the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region can bring some good ideas as a comprehensive competence development programme for the state administration is in the making (Bergström 2013, 2014). Specialities of that

project are that participating states will work out common procedures and joint methodologies, and resources will be allocated from the national programmes of European Social Fund.

- Parallel with strengthening the capacities of the state administration, I believe that the equitable involvement of bottom-up stakeholders is a key challenge in the EUSDR for the coming years. Bottom up stakeholders' roles and functions need to be better described, and more structured channels especially in the national coordination/implementation of EUSDR need to be built up. Institutionalized consultation processes - such as the national hearings – which are held at national level on annual base with the joint participation of state administration and bottom-up actors are promising conceptions in this respect (see Eisenstadt Declaration, 2014). In 2014 and 2015 the first of that kind of consultations were organised with the aims to establish structured mechanism for dialogues as a joint initiative of Priority Area 10 and the Danube Civil Society Forum.

The dissemination of information on EUSDR should reach a broader audience. In this respect some very concrete steps have been made as well. Since 2013 many platforms and websites have been established and there is a much better flow of information than in previous years e.g. major happenings of EUSDR, papers and conferences, Priority Area reports etc. are in wide range at disposal. However, especially participating states could improve their information supply by producing regular newsletters on their own language in order to access more stakeholders, trying after connecting vulnerable groups, actors from hinterland regions etc. better to EUSDR.

The most concrete request of bottom-up stakeholders was to set up broader financial resources and strengthen their partnership building abilities especially in areas such as culture, education and tourism. In this respect, micro funding for small scale projects and seed money facilities have been introduced. PA 10 has initiated Technical Assistance Facility, the Start Danube Region Fund and the Danube Financing Dialogue (EUSDR PA 10 report, 2015) and similar type of actions are planned/launched by other actors of EUSDR as well. The real question is if these tools can really reach stakeholders with actual need in the Middle and Lower Danube and whether they can operate as important incentives for strengthening international partnership and raising awareness of the strategy in a longer time period.

My viewpoint is that bottom-up actors also need to put solid efforts to strengthen their transnational network and they need to show stronger commitment towards the implementation of EUSDR. As promising opportunities might be the participation in national hearings and the enhanced cooperation in umbrella organizations and interest networks such as the Danube Civil Society Forum and Council of the Danube Cities and Regions. However the actual results and effectiveness of these initiatives are not known at this moment, that requires further assessments.

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Annexes

Questinaire (Esztergom):

Danube River Show Survey Questionnaire

Dear Participant of the Danube River Show,

One of the key aims of the Danube River Show is to assess the expectations and needs of local & regional actors, the civil society and the private sector in the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). Therefore, this survey focuses on your expectations, but at the same time it investigates problem areas associated with your participation in the EUSDR as well.

With your help a thorough analysis will be prepared. By this we can inform the key decision makers of EUSDR about the perspective of bottom-up actors. Filling out the survey will not take more than two minutes and all provided data will be kept confidential.

Thank you for your participation.

The Danube River Show Team

1. What type of organisation do you represent? *Milyen típusú szervezetet képvisel?*

- ☐ Local and regional organisation / *Helyi és regionális szervezet*
- ☐ State administration/ *Központi államigazgatás*
- ☐ Civil society/ *Civil szervezet*
- ☐ Academia/ *Akadémia*
- ☐ Private sector/ *Magán szektor*
- ☐ Media/ *Média*
- ☐ Other (please specify) / *Más (kérem részletezze)*

2. What are the activity fields/ profile of your organisation? *Mi a tevékenysége szervezetének?*

3. In which country / countries does your organisation have contacts? Multiple answers are possible. *Mely ország(ok)kal van az Ön szervezetének kapcsolata? Több válasz adható*
Austria

- ☐ Bosnia and Herzegovina
- ☐ Bulgaria
- ☐ Croatia / Horvátország
- ☐ Czech Republic / Csehország
- ☐ Germany / Németország
- ☐ Hungary
- ☐ Moldova
- ☐ Montenegro
- ☐ Romania
- ☐ Slovenia
- ☐ Slovak Republic
- ☐ Serbia
- ☐ Ukraine
- ☐ Other country / Más ország

4. Have you participated in any kind of event related to the EUSDR before? *Részt vett Ön bármilyen, az EUSDR-hez kapcsolódó eseményen?*

- ☐ Yes/Igen
- ☐ No/Nem

If yes, please specify/ Amennyiben igen, kérem részletezze

5. What are your expectations from EUSDR? *Mik az elvárásai az EUSDR-rel szemben?*

- ☐ It should help us to participate in international projects / *Támogassa részvételünket nemzetközi projekteken*
- ☐ It should provide answers for the development and challenges of our local surroundings/ *Nyújtson válaszokat a helyi környezet fejlesztéséhez, illetve kihívásaira*
- ☐ It should provide us wide range of information/ *Nyújtson széleskörű információszolgáltatást*
- ☐ It should promote different network co-operations connected to policies/ *Ösztönözze a hálózati együttműködéseket szakpolitikák mentén*
- ☐ It should especially support the co-operation in culture, education, health and environment protection/ *Különösen támogassa az együttműködést a kultúra, az oktatás, az egészségügy és környezetvédelem terén*
- ☐ Other (please specify)/ *Más (kérem részletezze)*

6. I find the concept of EUSDR excellent (5) vs. poor (1). / *A Duna Stratégia, mint koncepció megítélésem szerint kiváló (5) - gyenge (1)*

☐ 5 ☐ 4 ☐ 3 ☐ 2 ☐ 1

Comments / Megjegyzés

7. How do you assess the operation of EUSDR in the following areas excellent (5) vs. poor (1) or I have no information (0)? / *Milyennek értékeli az EUSDR működését az alábbi területeken kiváló (5) - gyenge (1) vagy nem rendelkezem információval (0)?*

• It helps us to participate in international projects / *Támogatja részvételünket nemzetközi projekteken*

☐ 5 ☐ 4 ☐ 3 ☐ 2 ☐ 1

• It provides answers for the development and challenges of our local surroundings/ *Válaszokat nyújt a helyi környezet fejlesztéséhez, illetve kihívásaira*

☐ 5 ☐ 4 ☐ 3 ☐ 2 ☐ 1

• It provides us wide range of information/ *Széleskörű információszolgáltatást nyújt*

☐ 5 ☐ 4 ☐ 3 ☐ 2 ☐ 1

• It promotes different network co-operations connected to policies/ *Ösztönzi a hálózati együttműködések szakpolitikák mentén*

☐ 5 ☐ 4 ☐ 3 ☐ 2 ☐ 1

• It especially supports the co-operation in culture, education, health and environment protection/ *Különösen támogatja az együttműködést a kultúra, az oktatás, az egészségügy és környezetvédelem terén*

☐ 5 ☐ 4 ☐ 3 ☐ 2 ☐ 1

• Other (please specify)/ *Más (kérem részletezze)*

8. The aims and programming structure of EUSDR are transparent (5) vs. hard to interpret (1). / *Az EUSDR céljai és programjai átláthatóak (5) - nehezen értelmezhetők (1)*

☐ 5 ☐ 4 ☐ 3 ☐ 2 ☐ 1

Comments / Megjegyzés

9. There are local and regional problems, own shortcomings that hinder our participation in projects of EUSDR (more answers are possible): / *Helyi és regionális szintű gondok, saját működési problémák, melyek nehezítik/gátolják részvételünket az EUSDR projekteiben (több válasz adható):*

☐ None/ *Nincsenek*

- ☐ Financial problems/ *Pénzügyi nehézségek*
- ☐ Staff problems/ *Személyügyi problémák*
- ☐ Project management problems / *Projekt menedzsment problémák*
- ☐ Lack of partners/ *Partnerek hiánya*
- ☐ EUSDR projects are not in our interest field/ *EUSDR projektek nem illeszkednek profilunkba*
- ☐ Lack of information/ *Információ hiány*
- ☐ Lack of government support/ *Kormányzati támogatás hiánya*
- ☐ Other (please specify) / *Más (kérem részletezze)*

Annex 2. International relations filtered by stakeholder groups

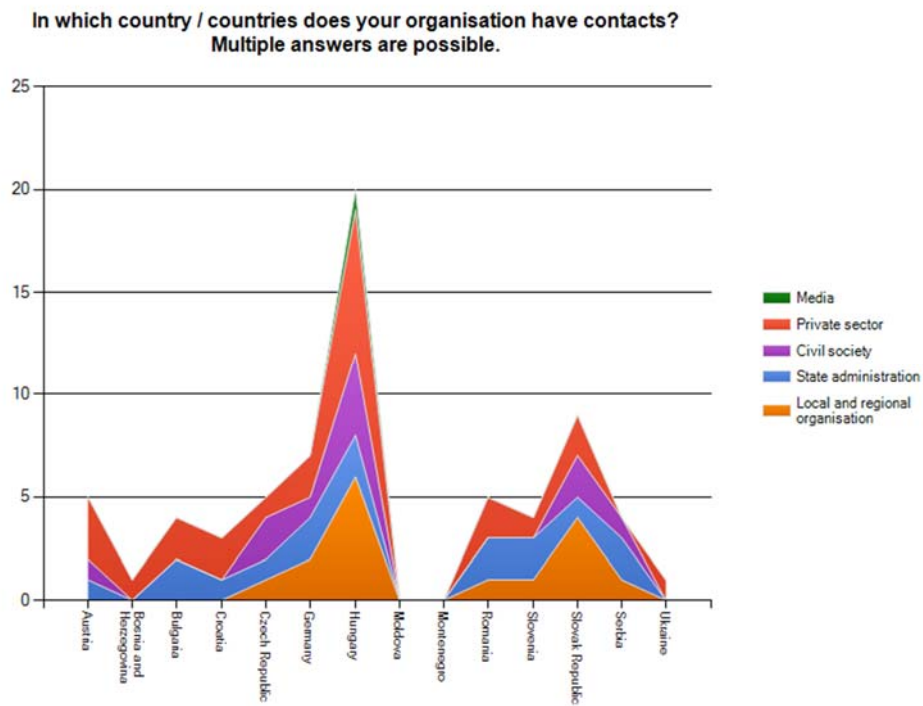


Figure 1: Esztergom/Sturovo (own illustration)

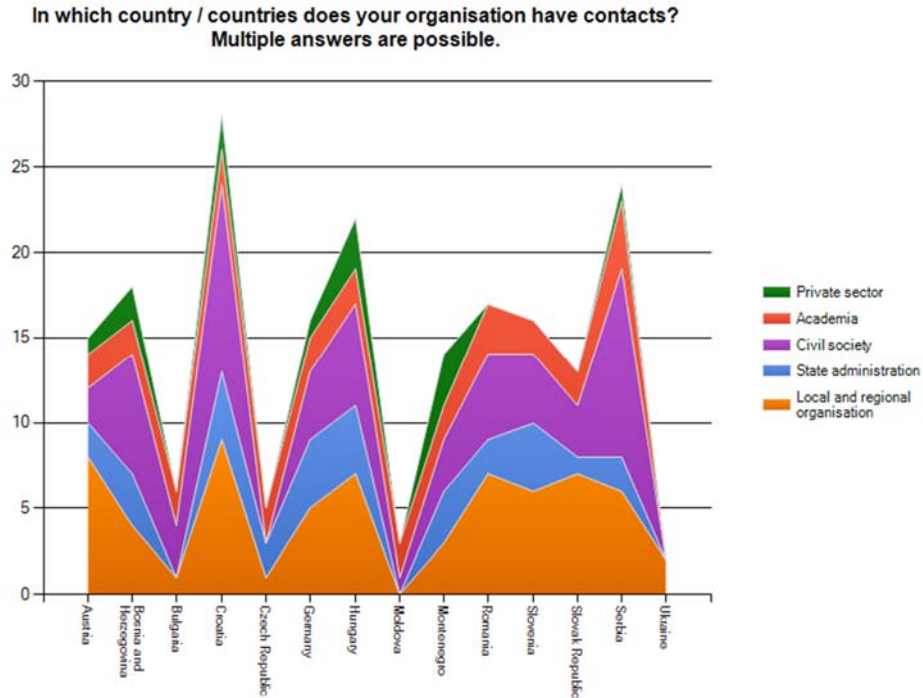


Figure 2: Novi Sad (own illustration)

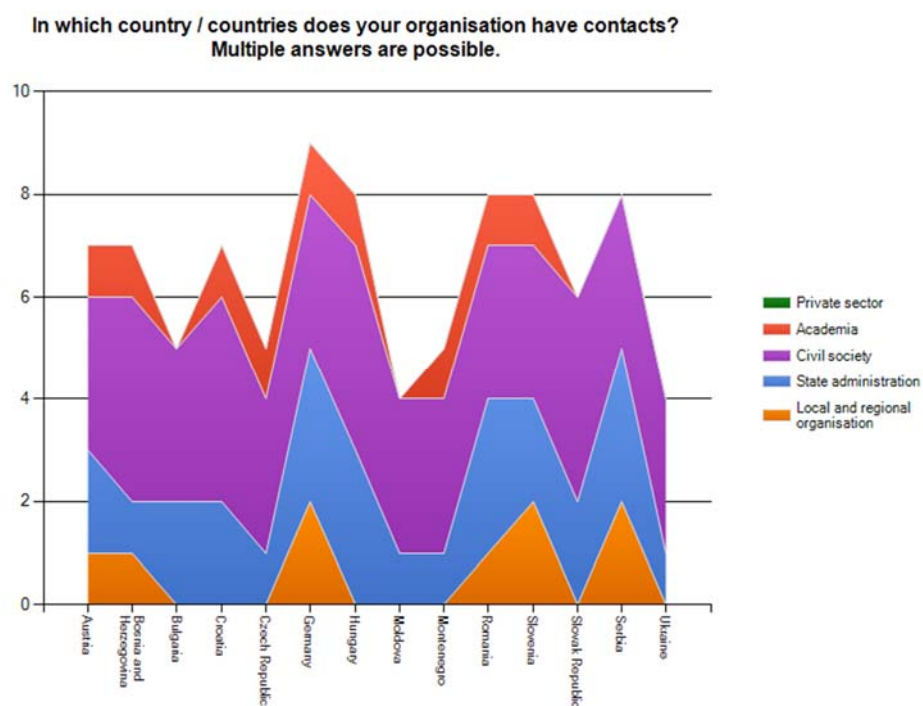


Figure 3: Smederevo (own illustration)

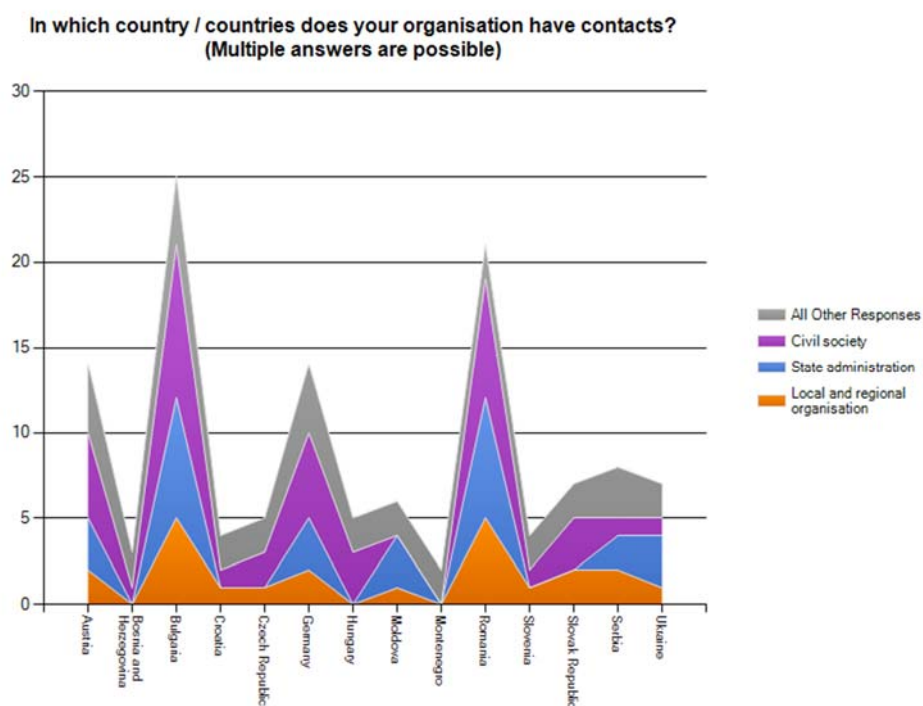


Figure 4: Ruse/Giurgio (own illustration)

ANNEX 3 Rationale of EUSDR assessed by stakeholder groups

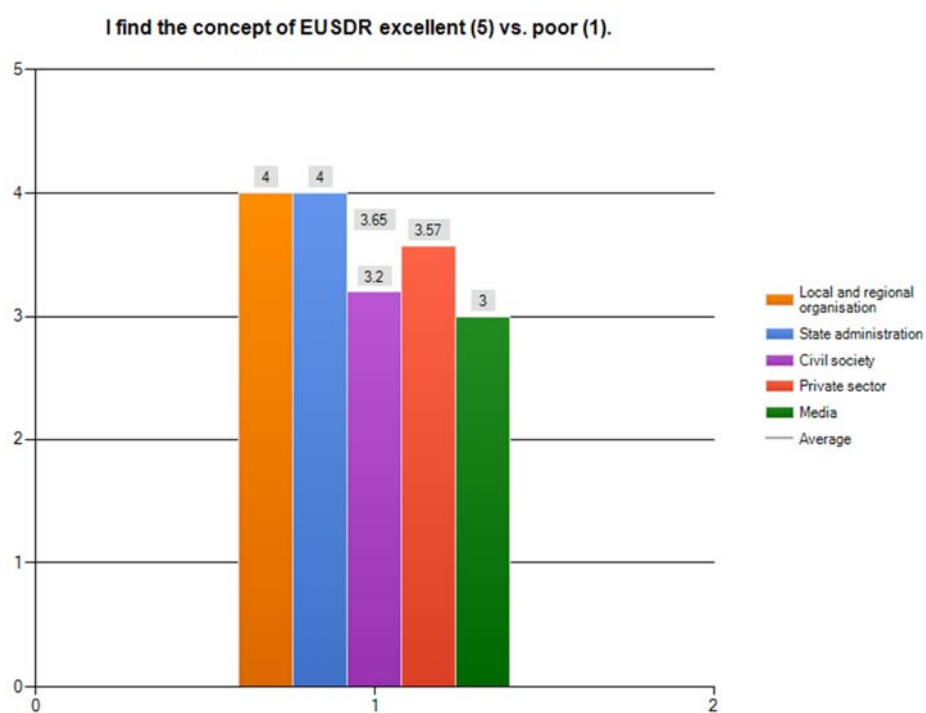


Figure 5: Esztergom/Sturovo (own illustration)

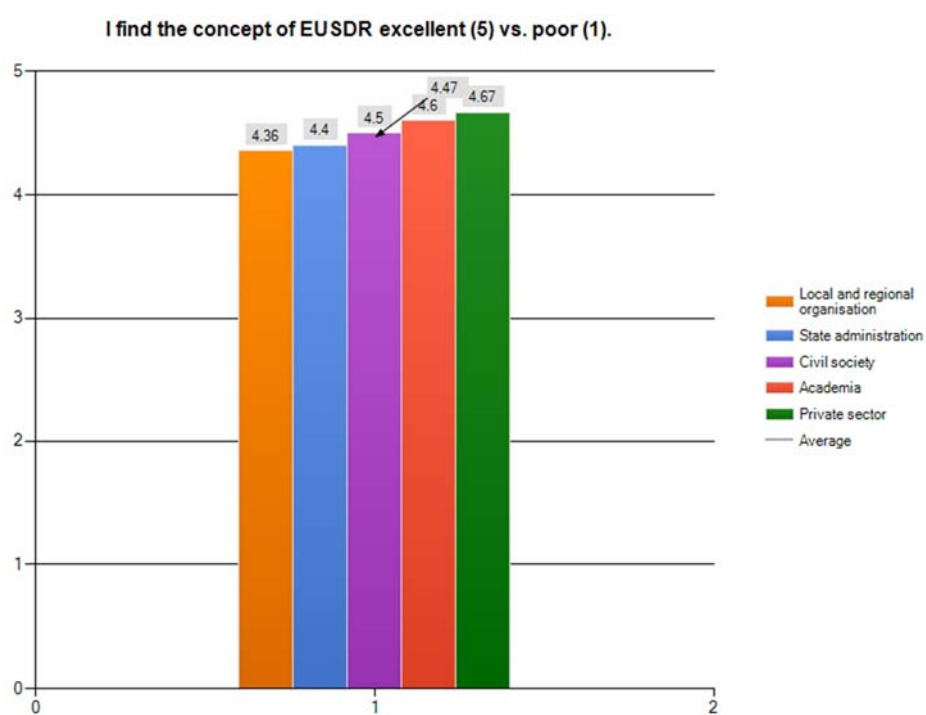


Figure 6: Novi Sad (own illustration)

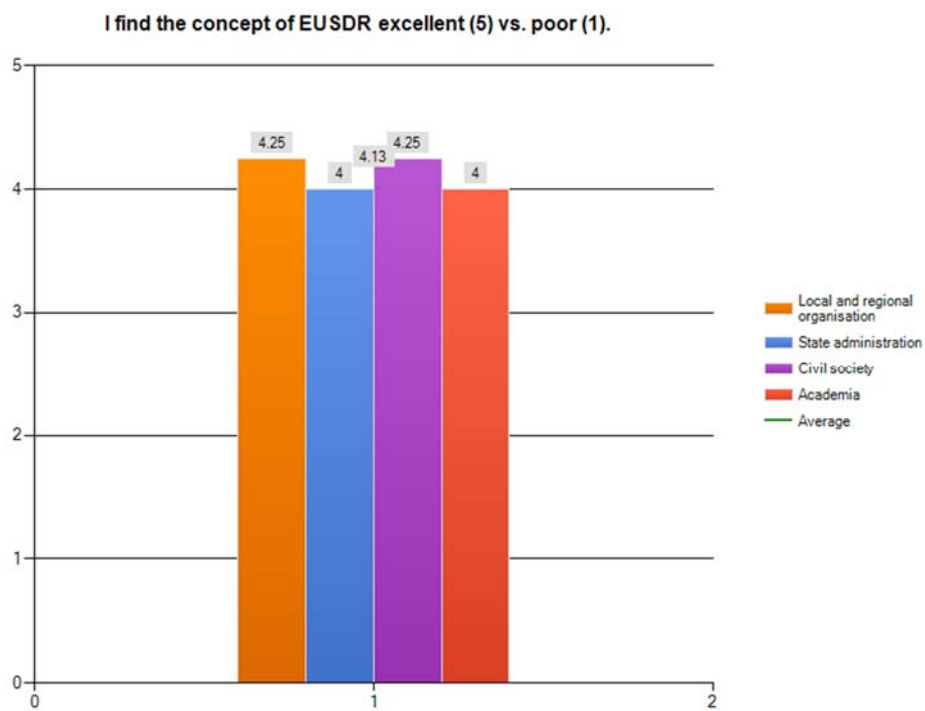


Figure 7: Smederevo (own illustration)

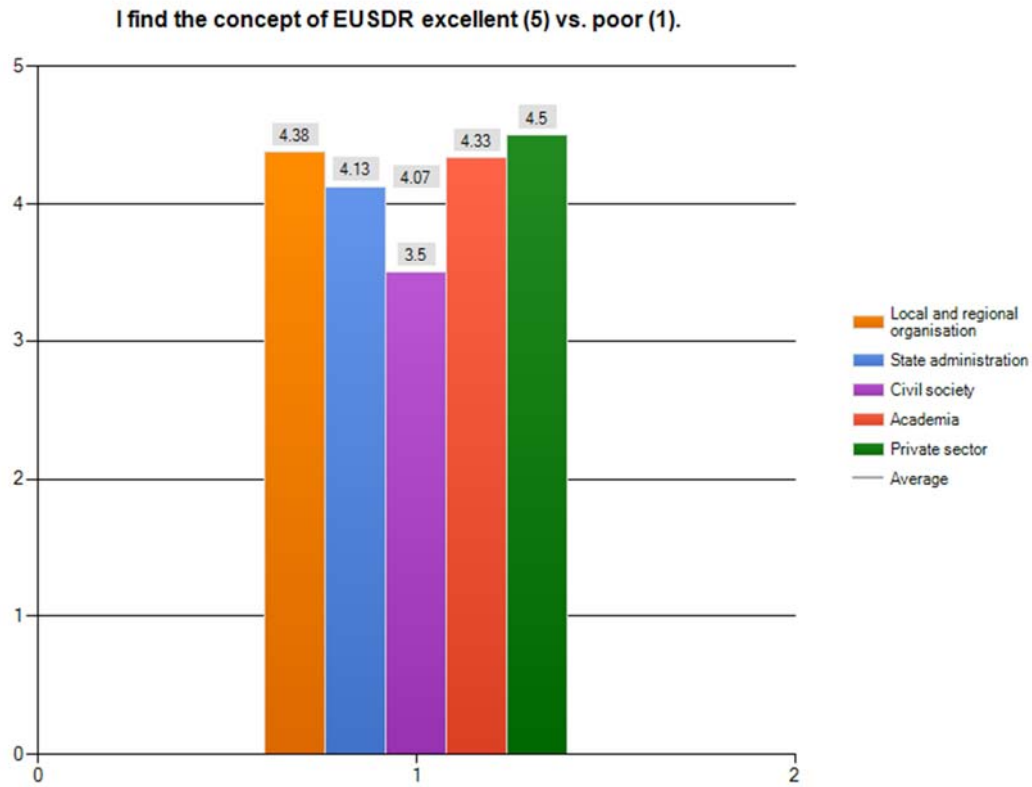


Figure 8: Ruse/Giurgiu (own illustration)

The implementation of EU funds in Southeast Europe

Klaus Roth, Emeritus Munich University,

Introduction: The absence of a convenient EU funding policy for South East Europe

The EU funding policy for the Southeast European EU members has not fulfilled expectations. The absorption rates of EU funds of Romania and Bulgaria are the lowest in the EU, which is partly due to the highly formalized application requirements and procedures. They have created a class of experts who are mostly located in the metropolitan centres, far less in the rural regions where they are needed most. With time and experience, however, the problem of administrative competence will be overcome.

The more difficult problem lies in the fact that all too often the absorbed funds end up in the 'wrong hands' or are used for the 'wrong purposes', i.e., purposes that are not intended by, or even run counter to, the goals of the EU. This fact has negative consequences for the societies and the EU, and for the image of the EU in Southeast Europe (SEE).

This paper takes a view "from below", from the perspective of socio-cultural reality in the SEE member countries; it relies on the findings of research projects, on EU progress reports and media reports, and on the author's observations over the last ten years.

The problem of EU funds for SEE being used by the wrong people or for the wrong purposes is a serious one, and because of its deep socio-cultural foundations it is very difficult to tackle. This is true particularly when the power of decision-making about the acquisition and allocation of funds lies in the hands of national institutions. The problems result mostly from reasons that are rooted, to a large extent, in the very specific historical experience of SEE societies, particularly in those countries that were part of the Ottoman Empire, and in the social structures that emerged from this. Five centuries of foreign rule have left these societies with the legacy of being "societies of public mistrust", as the ethnologist Christian Giordano (2007) phrased it. Societies of this type are characterized by a sharp dichotomy between those in power and the powerless, a relationship that is based on mutual *mistrust* and mutual dependence. People developed, over time, a whole system of defensive strategies or *strategies of the powerless* (cf. Roth 2002), according to which circumventing or disregarding the law or the state and outwitting the authorities play a central role. Acting against the law was, as Giordano (2007: 42) points out, not *legal*, but it was considered *legitimate* by the people who, at the same time, took from those in power whatever they could get.

In the new Balkan nation states established in the late 19th century there emerged a specific political culture that was based on this established socio-political structure. It consisted of a set of relations and behaviours of the political elites and the ordinary people, which H. Ganslandt (1992) has described for Greece more than twenty years

ago: The politicians kept their power by reacting to the defensive strategies of their voters by means of clientelistic relations and patronage, while the voters used these relations to gain from them for their own families. This created a general and wide-spread attitude that has been called “free-rider rationality” (Lauth Bacas 2004).

No society can function without *trust*. As a consequence of the lack of *institutional trust*, i.e., trust in the state and its institutions, people learned to trust only those persons who were loyal to them: family members and kin, friends and cronies. This almost exclusive reliance on *personal trust* did have grave consequences: It engendered or strengthened not only familism and nepotism, but also an extreme reliance on social networks of relatives and friends. The relationship between those who have access to resources and those who do not rested on complex systems of mutual dependence, systems of clientelism and patronage from which both sides profited (at the expense of public welfare and the development of civil society). Both the ordinary everyday corruption and the high-level political corruption were, and largely continue to be, perceived as “normal social behaviours” and unquestioned elements of everyday life²⁶.

In order to demonstrate the consequences of these socio-political structures and behaviours the paper focusses on two SEE member countries, Greece and Bulgaria.

The Greek Case

The pertinent research by Greek and non-Greek sociologists and ethnologists began more than a decade ago. The ethnologist Jutta Lauth Bacas (2004: 18) maintained that the inclusion of Greece into the procedures of the EU has produced an unexpected side-effect: It has led to the “consolidation and reification of double-faced behavioural forms which were not just occasional lapses of modern Greece into ‘un-European’ behaviours and practices. The country’s integration into EU procedures of financial transfers contributed to the consolidation and perpetuation of a free-rider rationality reminiscent of the Ottoman past. Modern Greeks’ free-riding is not related to *incomplete* modernization, on the contrary it has been consolidated as a behavioural pattern not *despite* the fact that Greeks are EU-citizens but *because* they became EU-citizens.”

The enormous financial transfers to Greece over a period of three decades contributed largely to the further growth of the system of political clientelism and patronage – and they encouraged irresponsible behaviours of the political elite. Departing from the traditional system of clientelistic relations, highly personalised social relations became constitutive for the Greek political system after WW II. The pre-accession period and the EU accession in 1981 made it possible to largely expand this system and to consolidate it in the form of a “social contract” that was based on a kind of barter: votes in exchange for state employment (or other services) procured by the ruling party, which controlled the entire state apparatus. This “contract” between the political elite (which received the necessary funds mostly from the EU or through credits), and their voters who were interested only in the welfare of their families, produced a spiral of favours (*rousfeti*) which all parties kept in motion.

²⁶ According to the 2013 Corruption Perception Index presented by Transparency International, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece have the lowest rankings of all EU member states.

This system turned the entire state and its institutions into resources that served both the political elites that were in power and their voters who became state employees or received other privileges. The enormous increase in persons employed by the Greek state or by companies belonging to the state²⁷ is evidence of the enormous power – and detrimental effect – of this “contract” between rulers and ruled.

The consequences of this system became obvious after the outbreak of the financial crises in 2009. It is certainly not wrong to say that not only internal mismanagement, but also the funding policy of the EU (with its intrinsic risk of funds being misused due to the lack of EU control mechanisms) have contributed to this crisis. In all too many cases EU subsidies were perceived by Greek partners on all levels as a ‘gift’ given to them by a ‘rich donor’ which the recipient was entitled to use to his own best, in the literal sense. This perception certainly collided with the ideas and intentions of the EU administration. By not considering the historical preconditions of Greece, its political culture, and its everyday practices, the EU thus financed behaviours that led it into the worst crisis of its history.

The Bulgarian Case:

In 2006, we (Petrova/Roth 2006) described cases of misuse of EU funds and came up with rather negative findings, including cases of EU funds that were absorbed by companies of the wives of high officials or ministers. My second case – based on observations – demonstrates that the situation appears to have changed slightly. It concerns EU projects for the development of SME through the *European Agricultural Fund for the Development of Rural Regions*. The site is a small mountain village that aims to develop tourism. Since the mid-1990s, transforming traditional houses into private guesthouses or building new ones in the traditional style was the most important economic activity. In 2007, there were plenty of guesthouses in the village.

After EU accession, there appeared new guesthouses of a larger size, outwardly in the traditional local style, one of them equipped with a large swimming-pool, all of them marked visibly as being funded by the EU. The owners of these new houses were not from the village, but belong to the political or economic elite. Locals reported that two of the houses were built for the two sons of a very powerful politician. The EU funding of these guesthouses does have several consequences for the village and its inhabitants:

a. The houses are economically not necessary, because there are already some 40-guest houses (which are empty most of the year). Building a large swimming pool in a village that depends on its own (and in summer often scarce) local water supply can be harmful for the villagers.

b. The guest houses are not really geared at general visitors, the accommodation prices are very high. There is evidence that they are meant to be for hosting members of the owners’ social networks, mostly from the political or economic elites. The EU-financed guesthouses thus help to support traditional familism, cronyism, and clientelism.

²⁷ Year + number of state employees in Greece: 1961: 270,000; 1981: 510,000; 1991: 722,000; 2004: 800,000; 2009: 900,000; 2010: 1,020,000 (figures from J. Lauth Bacas 2014).

c. From the viewpoint of the villagers (who live mostly in poor or very poor material conditions), it is very clear that the EU is giving money to those who are rich and powerful anyway – a perception that is very harmful for the image of the EU.

One can assume that from the perspective of the EU administration the projects are *formally* in order. But with regard to the *social* consequences, one can conclude that in such cases the EU is in danger of supporting members of the political elite who use EU funds for their private or political goals; of supporting social structures that run counter to its explicit goals of fighting corruption and supporting civil society; and of harming the public image of the EU. The latter point is indeed made in a recent novel of the famous Bulgarian writer M. Veshim (2013: 111) who mocks the EU and its funding of the ‘wrong people’, in this case of a Russian oligarch who bought an entire Bulgarian village and successfully applied for EU funding.

Concluding remarks and political recommendations:

The presented Bulgarian case indicates in an exemplary way that the funding of projects often ends up having negative results or unintended side effects such as, for example, supporting corruption instead of fighting it or hampering civil society instead of supporting it. “Doing bad by doing good?”, one might ask. What can be done to reduce such counterproductive outcomes?

In spite of the fact that the task of an ethnologist is observation and analysis, I want to advance some recommendations for EU funding in the SEE member countries.

1. In view of the very high degree of corruption among SEE politicians and officials, many of whom consider power predominantly as a means to obtain resources for their families and friends, the EU should make every attempt to stop corruption at the very source. The power of decision on the allocation of funds should not lie fully or exclusively in the hands of national ministries or regional administrations but rather in the hands of a task force of knowledgeable outside experts who cooperate with, but are independent from national administrations²⁸. Given the low degree of rule of law, which has often been deplored in the progress reports of the EU Commission, the *specialised prosecutors* recommended in the Interim Report of the EC will certainly not solve the problem of high-level corruption, because prosecutors are just as often in danger of being involved in corruption or of being under political pressure to do so.

2. In EU projects there is too much focus on *procedure* and *formality*. These aspects presuppose a lot of formal knowledge of domestic experts – knowledge that is a scarce commodity and can be misused, as we found out already in 2006. The EU should, instead, pay more attention (a) to *content* and socio-economic *consequences* of project proposals, (b) to their historical, social, and cultural *context*, and (c) to the *persons* involved, both the applicants and the actual recipients of EU funds, and be more aware of conflicts of interests.

3. Contrary to its still prevailing policy of “culture blindness” the EU should develop a larger awareness of, and sensitivity for, regional socio-cultural factors, e.g. SEE’s

²⁸ The present EU Task Force in Athens might serve as a model to be emulated in other SEE countries.

specific “historical path” (Sundhaussen 1999). But acknowledging the importance of such factors presupposes experts who are familiar with the respective country, its history, language, and the social practices of everyday life – in other words: people with local knowledge who can provide informed monitoring. There may arise a dilemma, though: Those experts who live in the respective country and know its language and culture may be involved in networks of vested interests or may be subjected to pressures, while outsiders who do not know the language and culture are in danger of being deceived by “Potemkin villages”. However, today there is an increasing number of educated persons – either in the diasporas or from western EU countries – with an intimate knowledge of the social reality of SEE countries²⁹. Their expertise should be used far more for the monitoring of projects. Both the EU and the people in the individual countries would profit largely from their competence.

4. With regard to monitoring, there should be a stronger focus on ex-ante assessment and monitoring of proposals, and on accompanying monitoring of ongoing projects. The accompanying monitoring in particular should be done only by outside persons who are familiar with the language and the everyday practices – and who can make unannounced visits on site.

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²⁹ The DSRN can play an important role in recruiting and guiding such experts.

Why is it difficult to implement EU funds in the countries of Southeastern Europe?

Rumen Valchev, Burgas Free University

Introduction

Three years ago Bulgaria was one of the countries within Europe relatively less use absorption of EU funds, with the data being very indicative. In 2011 Bulgaria is at the 26th place of use of with 20 % appropriation of the European Social Fund (the average for EU members is 56 %); 25 % use of the European Regional Development Fund and 29 % (the average is 33 %) - 25 place of Cohesion Fund.

The analysis of the Bulgarian Coalition for sustainable use of European funds from 2010 underlines, that “the problems with the planning and implementation of the Programmes operating with EU funds are not their own internal weaknesses, but symptoms of overall condition of the Bulgarian state executive authorities. Our findings and recommendations are regarding the continuing slow and often painful processes of EU rules and standards and administrative service acquisition by the Bulgarian administration. We believe that learning how to manage EU structural funds for Bulgaria well, which are only 4 % of Bulgaria's GDP is only the first small step towards learning how to manage well (meaning - responsibly, competently, sustainably and sagaciously) of the rest of the state budget expenditures.” (Coalition for sustainable use of EU funds 2010)

The European Union funds support the process of modernization or Europeanization of Bulgarian society. It is not simply a negotiation process concerning money transfer, but an opportunity for integrating into the Union, enforce processes of partnership and co-operative efforts, processes of shared management of the developments – economic, social and cultural as well as processes of building the necessary capacity for the country to become part of the modern European architecture.

It is very significant that if one attempts to look for an analysis of the current processes of management of the European funds in Bulgaria, it will be almost impossible to find serious critical assessments of the situation. Also, no academic research on the processes has been published. This paper attempts to critically highlight the existing difficulties within the Bulgarian system, which then lead to the low absorption rate of EU funds.

The implementation of EU funds in Bulgaria: the main challenges

From the point of view of institutional development, the process of acquisition of European funds does require modern management or institutional capacity to deal first with this amount of resources, second the establishment of the appropriate management structures as well as third the development of sophisticated processes of planning and realization. Moreover, a clear idea how the stakeholders could be involved in the process and how to get public support for it, is lagging.

All the historic developments as much in the distant past as the more recent developments are running against the realization of these objectives. In Bulgaria a

centuries-long tradition of a centralized model of ruling the society and of management of its problems by the hypertrophic state machine is prevailing. The presence of the bureaucratic system of decision making and limited participation on behalf of the social actors, lack of social co-operation and institutionalised corruption are only some examples of a complex setting

The lack of capacity for dealing with such a complicated mechanism, after decades of a centralized model, is the first answer to the difficult beginning of management of EU funds. This lack of capacity reflects on the isolated up-down approach of the bureaucratic administration to deal with the emerging problems - the gap between the negotiated and of appropriated funds, the arbitrary or politically coloured decisions taken by the administration, the lack of modern processing of information in the backyard of the tremendous processes of distribution of funds.

The European funding is as a new experience in the Bulgarian case; as new as the process of dealing with democracy or democratic management of society within the last two decades. The infrastructure necessary for such developments is simply missing, which was clear from the very beginning.

European funds acquisition and management is something more than the distribution of resources. It requires a vision of the country development (which is lost somewhere between the numerous programmes and technical details, clarifications and recommendations), a vision of the development the society attempts to achieve in the context EU integration. "In Bulgaria the European support is not accompanied by strategic national policies and does not take into account the needs and strengths of the local level and does not follow the requirements or the EU for sustainability, social cohesion of the investments" (Coalition for sustainable use of EU funds 2010). It is a paradox, but after the so called vision-based socialist regime, where planning and building of visions was part of the functioning of the system, it is not possible to develop visions in the period of transition to democracy. In order to allocate the EU funds an overall strategy or vision however, would be a necessity. The vision is necessary not only to deal with the enormous amount of resources, but also to put it into the framework of European and national developments. More concretely, "with regard to the European priorities in the environment and the shift toward low-carbon economy, Bulgaria should ensure systematic political support to the investments in energy efficiency, development of competitive railroad transport, development of sustainable city transportation system, protection of water resources and biodiversity, support to the prevention, reuse and recycling of waste, development of organic bio agriculture" (Coalition for sustainable use of EU funds, 2010). Non one of these measures became part of a vision for sustainable development and they do appear in national plans more like a kaleidoscope of loosely connected ideas for improvement of the current situation.

Lack of vision is connected with the evident lack of political will to implement the plans and the negotiated agreements or to set new ways of using the funds. This is striking due to the last Bulgarian government which had full mandates and had the opportunity to express this will in actions. It was interesting that the only broadly disseminated and partially accepted vision in the EU membership period of the country included highway infrastructure which is an important task, but which could hardly replace the

need of a multifaceted and articulated vision for a democratic society which belongs to EU in the beginning of the 21st century.

We have to point out that the problem of human resources is one of the main obstacles of effective use and management of European funds. The very first point here is the migration of more than a million of young people, who left the country in the last two decades. This is an enormous stroke for a country with a population of slightly over 7 million inhabitants, of which one third is over 60 and about one fifth uncompetitive from a point of view of educational census or professional background. The low capacity of the institutions, target groups and the beneficiaries is the next factor, which has to be tackled systematically and decisively. With this in mind, we need to question the responsible institutions: What is their policy towards the relatively small qualified staff in the administration and what is the policy regarding the large number of vacant expert positions in the administration which remain vacant even now?

It is clear now that the so called managerial capacity is not something which could be understood as a transfer of people from administration to the new positions in the funding structures, leading to problems for stakeholders at different levels – national or regional as much as in the business sector or in civil society. This leads to a missing counterbalance to pure political decisions leaving the society out of negotiation processes, which has been the experience with the vis-à-vis of the experienced European administration and other EU partners.

This lack of capacity determines the lack of political will which would be needed to mobilize rare resources in order to accomplish sometimes not very popular results. The understanding of the funding process as something which is imposed on the Bulgaria by others (EU administration, EU partners!), is a result of this missing competence within the administration and the outcome of the negotiations. For the people with limited horizons and no vision and competences EU funding seems more like a game with unclear or too complicated rules which do not serve Bulgarian but foreign interests. This lack of capacity leads to corruption and political influences and does not make the government and its agencies champions of Europeanization.

Also a lack of public support can be identified. At first glance, the very simple cause is underlined. The whole machinery of EU funding is unclear to the wider public (or it is better to say is conceived as intentionally designed as complicated and unclear). “Another factor which hinders the wide participation of beneficiaries and stops the already approved projects are the complicated procedures and terms of application, the aggravated communication regarding the projects and the administrative assistance with low quality from the Operational Programmes administration. Generally speaking, the responsible institutions continue to do their part extremely unsatisfactory, which is their responsibility according to the EU regulations regarding the support of target groups during their application and project implementation.” (Coalition for Sustainable Use of EU Funds 2010). And here we are coming to the essence of the problem – the biggest majority of the ageing or not motivated population without educational capacity and with narrow horizons could not understand the essence of EU funding process and is unable to participate effectively and engagingly in it. Very often there is even not enough understanding among the

most dynamic parts of the society - entrepreneurs, local authorities and civil society structures.

For local authorities EU funding could be seen as a chance for emancipation, as a capacity building process, as an opportunity of realization of public policies for which there is not or not enough local and national funding, as an opening toward the broader world, as an opportunity to develop relations and partnerships with the civil society and business, but as well as a burden (because of lack of capacity – financial, human, managerial), as a dangerous tool in the hands of the national authorities in the process of negotiation.

For the entrepreneurs – funding is a chance for development, for making things and plans and visions happen, a chance for sustainability, but as well often risky and filled with uncertainties, a process where it is common to admit and to accept political pressures and to continue with corruption practices.

For civil society structures EU funding is often seen as a chance for survival, for emancipation from the political authorities and in the same time an opportunity for building relations and partnership with the authorities, for getting the status of a significant local or national actor. One of the objectives of EU funding is the support for the development of civic society. Very often the civil society (with some small exceptions) is confused, uninformed, not empowered or simply through unclear and often corrupted procedures not allowed to participate in the funding process. In fact there is a lack of a sustainable and viable link between the authorities and civil society co-operation. In Bulgaria the civil society has been artificially created (as the whole democratic machinery) and does not have enough credit as a partner but we have to note that as well authorities and entrepreneurs do not have often such credit. In the last decade the real development is that the municipalities (and political parties) and ministries did create or support their civic organizations, their entrepreneurs, their institutions or networks. More than half of the organizations asked by the organizers of a EU funding survey, have not worked in partnership with their municipalities. (Coalition for Sustainable Use of EU Funds 2010) The interviews under the same survey also show low assessment of the respondents' own capacity and readiness of the beneficiaries. Many beneficiaries state that the programme administrations should carry out additional trainings and awareness campaigns for the smooth implementation of the projects. Some beneficiaries state that the reporting instructions and project monitoring are too formalized and aggravated. One of the paradoxes in the recent development is that the EU structural funds are almost closed for civic organizations although they have received a lot of training in the period of pre-accession and did accumulate expertise how to realize projects, to develop partnerships and to become part of networks. For example, there was a call for social entrepreneurship projects under which civic society structures have not been allowed. The municipalities applied only with 40 projects while there were resources for around 200 projects.

Eurofunding had caused the rise of the class (or at least of a significant group) of experts coming from the authorities, civic society and business – project designers and managers who could serve the needs of each of the three groups. The complicated nature of EU projects makes the existence and the prosperity of this

group as a substantial part of the process,. This, however, alienates the civic society organizations with a smaller capacity, makes small municipalities dependent on their expertise and makes the whole process professionalized, not transparent and unclear for the general public.

With this development another characteristic feature of EU funding in Bulgaria is connected, the growing instrumentalisation of the European idea. Funding is considered to become a process not of negotiation based on interests, but as a bargaining between Bulgaria and other EU partners and between the national stakeholders and the state or its authorized structures. There then is a small step towards appropriation and using funds for some narrow and unclear interests. We are witnessing in the last years the process of "privatization" of the EU idea - the big ruling parties (or coalitions) have been using it extensively for their purposes and interests, which in fact comes very close to the classic definition for corruption. Even in election periods the cause of EU funds is not a case for a competition between different visions or ideas, but a fight who will gain control over the funds and who will manage the process in its (its members or lobbies) interests. The loss of vision or the prevalence of narrow private interests is a serious danger for the effectiveness and sustainability of the funding process. Excessive bargaining or fight over money could not be seen or justified as a right road toward social development and improvement.

If every project is assessed as a certain amount of money to be taken, if the whole amount of funding is defined as a good bargain, such process is opposing Bulgaria to Europe, interests of oligarchy or politicians to EU interests. All this instrumental treatment and privatization for political or pure economic purposes of EU funding process is in its essence anti-European and causes enormous harm not only to the funding process and its results, but to the EU-Bulgarian relations. EU funding is an exceptional chance for democratic development for the countries, which are coming late to the democratic processes. Instrumentalization and privatization of funding undermines the idea of democracy and prospects of democracy itself. This privatization of the European idea is very demoralizing especially for the young people and disempowers the population and its most dynamic part. What we are witnessing is that a new created political "Gemeinschaft" (a small group of politicians, oligarchs and lobbies behind them) tries to present itself as a "Gesellschaft" - to present its narrow interests as national or European interest.

Concluding remarks and political recommendations

As about the future we could follow the recommendations of the civic society actors for: wider transparency and publicity of the procedures and results of the programmes and practices of their implementation; adherence to all requirements of EU regulations regarding the access to reports of the programmes related to their management, implementation, advancement, financial accountancy, monitoring and evaluation; to anticipate the "appearance" of the public component - the integrated management and monitoring system of the EU funds. Urgent measures are to be taken for the strengthening of the insufficient administrative capacity of the programme administration. The future lies in the development of a strong and competitive administration, in new more effective forms of control (public control in this case), in fighting the political corruption and the process of politicization of EU

funding, in effective electronic information systems, in better coordination between the institutions and agency at all levels, special care and support for civil society development.

Barely created, the system of EU funding does not function well. In summary politicization, privatization, corruption, lack of confidence between all actors, fighting instead of co-operating, interests under the surface, indifferent public and disempowered actors and the growing mistrust in the EU and in the European idea, which is intentionally supported and developed, could be defined as typical elements of the first decade of the accession to EU.

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Postscript

In the middle of 2015 (the year which marks the end of financing under the 2007-2013 Programme Period) Bulgarian President mr Rossen Plevneliev declared: “ This year we will appropriate as much funds as the one appropriated during the first seven years”. From 23 place in funds absorption by the beginning of 2015 (65%), in September of the same year the country improved this percentage up to 85% (Dnevnik, September 13). We would like to reach the maximum, but even the attainment of 92-93% of acquisition for this first Programme Period will be a success “- mentioned the deputy prime minister responsible for European Funds mr Tomislav Donchev in an interview with Mediapool (September 14,2015). At a parliamentary hearing he commented that 80% of the public investments in Bulgaria have been coming from Eurofunds, and the financial minister mr Vladislav Goranov added that the euromoney will be the main accelerator of the economic development and simply Bulgaria could not continue on the road of development without this funding in the coming 6-7 years. (Dnevnik, September 13)

In this way Bulgaria concludes successfully the first Program Period. Notwithstanding the before mentioned problems, thanks to the political will and the actions of the Bulgarian government and with the understanding support of the EU institutions, the result acquired is more than satisfactory.

We could note that now the appropriation of the Eurofunds becomes highly institutionalized activity. By the end of the 2015 the Parliament will pass the Law of Management of European Structural and Investment funds. This law regulates the mechanisms and the order of delivering non-refundable financial aid and the relations between different agencies and the beneficiaries in the process of projects realization, including the processes of verification and certification of expenditures and commitment of payments.

The second important structural development is that a special fund will manage the financial instruments under EU programmes. This “umbrella fund” will unite the management of the currently separated, but structured together elements of the different operative programs. In the meantime the established in 2010 Information

System for Management and Observation of EU Structural Instruments will be upgraded. The objective is to create environment, which will support and facilitate all the participants in the process of management of European funds, of the standardization of the basic documents and in the use of structured data.

If we could take stock of the results it seems that in spite of the limited investment capacity of the Bulgarian economy, the private innovation projects which competed for funding under the Operational Programme Innovations and Competitiveness have been six times more the budget of the Programme available. In the same time the budget of the field of impact where the projects had to be realized by institutions, local authorities, NGO's was rather too big and difficult to be appropriated.

We could note the very conservative management of the EU fund during this first period where the focus was based on the fear of misusing European money and consequently very restrictive set of conditions for participation under grant schemes has been established. Today is clear that the priority is the absorption of funds and not their preservation and the results are evident. The biggest challenge for the new programme period is the quality of appropriation of EU funds. The requirement of EU Commission is that each country should design own innovation strategy aiming at intelligent specialization, where only few fields of innovation will be the leading ones. By the end of 2014 Bulgarian Government did approve Innovation Strategy for Intelligent Specialization. The four main fields of action are not different from those of the other East-European EU members - informatics and ICT; mechatronics and clean technologies; healthy life industry and biotechnologies; new technologies in creative and re-creative industries.

More and more important becomes the understanding of EU funds as an opportunity and a mechanism for accelerated development, as an integration opportunity, as a chance for improving the country capacity for dealing with the development problems. The last two years showed the importance of the political will and action for the realization of EU funding. In the same time these first years marked only the beginning of the process of steady improvement of the capacity of the different groups and actors to absorb funds and to realize projects under the funding programmes. The institutionalization of the EU funding process and of the informational infrastructure will make the appropriation processes more transparent and will help to overcome the euroscepticism and will ensure conditions for optimal use of EU funds.

The added value of the integrated approach: the case of Hungary

Tamás Kaiser, National University of Public Service

Introduction

Added value sounds a bit like business jargon-and it is! For example, business can provide added value by building a brand, delivering excellent services, product features and benefits, offering convenience. There are also efforts to make clear what „European added value” means, but the term up to now has been used in many different contexts, including a reflection on the EU budget, defining goals and criteria for project selection. As a result the sources and nature of the added value vary from intervention to intervention.

Nevertheless at the beginning of the new programming period it is worth putting an emphasis on that aspect of the macro-regional strategies. In 2013, the European Commission published a report concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies, clarifying the concept and providing recommendations for the future work (European Commission, 2013). The well-documented report raised further questions: How can be the main elements of added value identified? How can they be measured? To what extent are they applicable from one strategy to another? Next year, broadening the scope of its assessment, the Commission underlined the need for stronger political leadership, increased ownership from the participating countries, regions and civil society organisations as well as highlighted the potential consequences of the lack of proper capacities and resources (European Commission, 2014). In addition, there are many attempts to draw on lessons focusing on the relationship between the functional areas and the crosscutting nature of the concept of territorial cohesion, the synergies and effects with other EU-funded transnational programmes within the overall framework of the governance structure applied (Othengrafen/Cornett 2013, Philippe, Böhme/Zauch 2014, Ágh et al. 2014).

The aim of this short paper is to examine the relationship between the principles of territorial cohesion and integrated approach in terms of possible modes of governance that match macro-regional strategies adopted in the EU. The second point of the paper is the analysis of the institutional arrangement from both “top-down” and “bottom-up” view, concerning the case of Hungary. The last section contains conclusions relating to the future perspectives of the need for enhanced coordination and integrated approach in order to help describe and understand the day-to-day operation of macro-regional strategies.

Territorial cohesion: a crosscutting principle without clear-cut definition

The nature of macro-regional strategies can only be understood only in relation to various shifts in the EU policy framework. Territorial cohesion is a new explicit and crosscutting principle in the general regulation without having a clear-cut definition, though its basic features have been adopted³⁰. In addition to traditional convergence

³⁰ In the course of the debates so far, three main directions in interpreting territorial cohesion have appeared. Territorial cohesion is first of all about mobilising development potential, not compensating for handicaps. Secondly, it is facilitated by the method of an integrated approach which suggests ways of improving synergies between sectoral policies that have a strong territorial impact.

priorities, targets of competitiveness and territorial capital emerged, indicating that a clear paradigm-shift has occurred in cohesion policy (Böhme et al. 2011, Medeiros 2011, Regulation on Territorial Cooperation). The new concept enables citizens and enterprises to make the most of the inherent features of their territories. By exploring the importance both of the endogenous potential and the vulnerability, tailor-made and integrated solutions came to the fore replacing the former “one-size-fits-all” approach. Since today’s challenges cross more and more administrative boundaries the territorial impact of sectoral policies have to be taken into account in an integrated manner. As a result, reaching any kind and extent of territorial cohesion presupposes the application of the changing forms of integrated approach.

However, there is a latent tension between the principle of thematic concentration on the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy and the territorial objectives of cohesion policy. After the conclusion of the “Lisbon decade” the Europe 2020 Growth and Competitiveness Strategy was approved on 3 March 2010 after a relatively short consultation procedure between the end of November 2009 and mid-January 2010 (European Commission 2010). The strategy has three main priorities (smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth), five policy goals (employment, R&D/innovation, climate change/energy, education, and poverty/social exclusion), and seven flagship initiatives³¹. It applies a thematic and integrated approach, policy coordination in the EU and its member states, and large-scale reporting duties. However, this neither results in a real policy paradigm-shift nor the adjustment of the main priorities of the previous Lisbon Strategy (2000 – 2010).³² In other words, the approach and content of the Europe 2020 Strategy only remotely meets earlier expectations. The concept of territorial cohesion appears throughout the strategy including topics like inclusive growth, innovation in the field of R&D, education, and resource-efficient technologies. However, there is no specific guidance about how to put territorial aspects of policy into practice (Böhme et. al 2011: 13). In addition, key basic categories such as accessibility, functional areas, territorial capital, and public services are missing; the definition of networks is limited to infrastructure and transport.

Yet, underestimating the impacts of territorial aspects could lead to severe biases in implementation. In order to achieve inclusive growth completely different projects are needed in peripheral rural areas than in medium and large cities in need of structural reforms (Böhme et al. 2011: 10). Nevertheless, applying an integrated approach could simultaneously find answers to questions such as optimal territorial scope, the coordination of intersecting and overlapping initiatives and the elimination of parallelisms. Last but not least this would include the creation of the necessary institutional and administrative capacities. After all this it is important to ask whether

Thirdly, territorial cohesion emphasizes the importance of the need for a flexible and functional approach in order to better understanding of situations and processes in different geographical scales (Medeiros 2011; Mendez 2012).

³¹ The Europe 2020 flagship initiatives in detail: 1. Innovation Union, 2. Youth on the move, 3. Digital agenda for Europe, 4. Resource efficient Europe, 5. An industrial policy for the globalization era, 6. An agenda for new skills and jobs, 7. European platform against poverty.

³² Europe 2020, similar to the previous Lisbon Strategy, is trying to combine different economic and social visions, capitalism models, which may also cause problems in implementation, since certain member states and some groups of states apply different variations.

the integrated approach brings a truly innovative and effective approach to the new regional paradigm.

Integrated approach: from common myths to right balances

The starting point to understand the essence of integrated approach is that drivers of growth are different among regions but are always interdependent in each region. In addition the new paradigm of territorial development is based on territorial competitive advantages („no-one-size-fits-all”) and its endogenous potential as well as considering the high vulnerability index facing all European regions. As a result more and more crosscutting (horizontal) policy issue gained importance requiring that the relevant actors have to recognize their interdependence and work collaboratively. An integrated approach does not follow no standard definition but the main elements of it have been established (Rodrigues 2011, Pálné/Scott/Gál 2013). However, controversial statements have emerged: integration among policies is an explicit form of territorial development; unexpected externalities and conflicts may arise, hindering the process of integration; integration among policies only is possible within areas with administrative boundaries, but, at the same time the importance of functional areas cannot be denied; integration among policies is chiefly dealt with during the programming phase, but due to its high uncertainty it is impossible to anticipate all the relevant consequences, so in the implementation phase any particular programme or project may undergo change.

So what is the proper balance to avoid conflicts among stakeholders and policy sectors? In the first place, creating coordination mechanisms and institutions between the administrative and functional areas are needed within the framework of the state administration in order to facilitate contact with their counterparts in other regions. The coordination mechanisms are underlined in different ways by policy coordination due to the more resilient functional approach. As a result the most appropriate territorial level might vary, while different partners at different levels might find it hard to cooperate as well. Broadly speaking, this could be a problem of interprofessional collaborations: working horizontally is very time-and-resource consuming.

At this point, according to the concept of MLG, the “types” developed by Gary Marks and Liesbet Hooghe seem to be the proper “toolbox” to address how the governance of functional macro-regions works.³³ The Type 2 model could be useful to explore the nature of enhanced coordination in transnational cooperation in general, and in the case of functional macro-regions in particular. To achieve this, the key challenge for MLG is in fact to become a real “territorial governance” able to establish horizontal and vertical coordination between various levels and sectoral policies with territorial impacts. This kind of institutional arrangement could expand the role of the “level” at

³³Gary Marks and Liesbet Hooghe’s often-cited model is based on two forms of governance. Type 1 creates general purpose jurisdictions, non-intersecting memberships and a limited number of relatively stable levels that can be found in conventional territorial government with a strong federalist inspiration, while Type 2 allows for more task-specific jurisdictions, with tailored membership and a flexible design, more likely to be found in cross-border regions and widespread on the local level (Marks and Hooghe 2004: 29.).

which new challenges can be addressed. So besides the regional level (NUTS II) local and sub-regional levels might also come into consideration³⁴.

The interrelationship between territorial cohesion, integrated approach and institutions makes it necessary to create innovative tailor-made arrangements at national level in order to put the basic institutional structure in motion incorporated in the EUSDR Action Plan. The last part of the paper highlights the case of Hungary as an example of establishing a multi-level and network-oriented structure within the authority of the state administration.

The institutional framework of the EUSDR in Hungary

The commitment of Hungary towards the Strategy was indicated through the endorsement in of the strategy during its Presidency in June 2011. Key stakeholders in Hungary are organized as follows: The task of the National Coordinator (NC) is fulfilled by the office of the EUSDR led by the Commissioner of the Government within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Priority topics, for which the Hungarian authorities have taken over the coordination role, are energy, water quality and environmental risks as well as navigability or cooperation on innovation and competitiveness. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible for Priority Area (PA) 2 (sustainable energy), while the General Directorate of Water Management (a central public administration organ within the Ministry of Interior) is responsible both for PA 4 (quality of water) and PA 5 (environmental risks). In order to coordinate the operation of the three PAs, a National Coordination Platform for the strategy has been established, including experts from Steering Groups, sectoral ministries, and the PA coordinators for PA 2, 4, 5. This platform is coordinated by the Government Commissioner, who is also responsible for all the EUSDR projects for 2014-2020. It is worth mentioning that the Ministry for National Economy – with contributions from its background institution, the Office for National Economic Planning – was in charge of preparing the Hungarian Partnership Agreement (HPA). It required additional forms of collaboration with the Government Commissioner. However, this kind of extended coordination mechanism has proven crucial because a special planning mechanism was established on behalf of the EUSDR. The Government Commissioner and his experts took part directly in the inter-ministerial working group set up to help prepare the Hungarian Partnership Agreement 2014-2020 and also in the meetings associated with its Operational Programmes (OP).³⁵ In addition, thematic meetings have been organised with the participation of experts responsible for the implementation of EUSDR as well as members of the inter-ministerial working groups established for supporting each OP.

Altogether, this centralised but rather fine-tuned working structure has been able to provide full participation for the EUSDR stakeholders in the preparation process of

³⁴For example in Hungary decentralised territorial development will be implemented at county (NUTS III) level, in cities with county rights and in smaller towns including their agglomerations.

³⁵ Operational Programmes, according to the Partnership Agreement for Hungary, 2014-2020: Human Resources Development OP, Economic Development and Innovation OP, Public Administration and Services OP, Environmental and Energy Efficiency OP, Integrated Transport OP, Territorial OP, Competitive Central Hungary OP, Rural Development Programme, OP Fisheries (Ministry for National Economy, 2013).

the HPA as well as of making permanent contacts with the relevant experts of the EUSDR.

In order to promote networking and other initiatives the so-called Budapest Contact Point was established by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Government of Hungary. The main aim of the BDCP is to facilitate the development of feasible and financeable transnational investment projects, speed up preparation, and assess their “bankability”. The Budapest Contact Point is a “smart tool” which aims at assigning optimal financing structures to projects via in-depth knowledge of available grants, financial instruments, and its European Investment Bank liaison. By promoting and supporting the development of transnational and integrated concepts (e.g. integrated feasibility studies for other functional regions), the Budapest Contact Point develops universal and replicable sectorial cooperation models for the benefit of similar initiatives in other parts of the EUSDR. However, at the moment there are not too many projects available, because many Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) and Steering Groups are not very active in this field. The Budapest Contact Point is also working on the Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund but only a few countries are interested. Nevertheless, it is a promising initiative that could play the role of a “magnet” or “primary organiser” in creating professional networks.

The legislative package for the 2014-2020 programming period established a new transnational programme for the Danube region as part of the European Territorial Cooperation. Conforming to the proposition of the European Commission, the partner countries of the given programme area are setting up 15 transnational programmes within the European Territorial Cooperation. As such, the partner countries of the 2007-2013 Central European Programme – financially supported by the EU’s European Regional Development Fund - increase to nine with the joining of Croatia, whereas the South-Eastern European 2014-2020 Programme continues in the following three new forms: the Danube Transnational Cooperation Programme – covering the same areas as the EUSDR, the Adriatic Ionian Strategy, and thirdly the Balkans-Mediterranean Programme in the respective areas.³⁶ The Danube Transnational Programme is a financing instrument with a specific scope and supports the policy integration in the Danube area in selected fields under the EU regulations linked to the EUSD. Among them the Regulation on Territorial Cooperation underlines the need for “enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by developing and coordinating macro-regional and sea-basin strategies”.³⁷

Hungary participates in the Interreg Central Europe 2020³⁸ and the Danube Transnational Programme. Consequently, since the geographically covered area is identical, the implementation tool of the EUSDR could be primarily – though not exclusively – the Danube Transnational Programme. However, its expected budget cover only 0.2% of the recourses allocated to the implementation of EUSDR. Total

³⁶For further information: <http://www.southeast-europe.net/> (accessed 12.10.2015)

³⁷ To achieve this, the Danube Transnational Programme provides development and practical implementation of transnational tools and service as well as training and capacity building.

³⁸For further information: <http://www.central2020.eu/> (accessed 12.10.2015)

community support (European Regional Development Fund and Instrument for Pre-Accession) amounts to 222 million euro.

As the areas involved in the programmes fall under different national governmental jurisdictions, the partner countries need to work within the framework of extremely tight international cooperation. Due to its international character, the management of the transnational programmes differs significantly from the national implementation practice of the Structural Funds. The major difference lies in the separation of governmental representation and programme-management accountability. As a result, according to current EU practice, the Managing Authority does not play a strategic and decision-making role.

Therefore management of transnational cooperation programmes encompasses three different levels. The first one – the decision-making level – is constituted of representatives delegated by the respective member states at national level (for some countries at regional level). The second level, made up by the Managing Authority and the Joint Technical Secretariat, is responsible for the technical tasks of the implementation. The third level – the level for national implementation – focuses on the validation of the expenditures occurring at national level. Thus the declarations on the validation of expenditures issued at national level serve as the basis for covering the financial expenses of the project.

As for Hungary, it is significant that the Managing Authority and the Joint Technical Secretariat of the Danube Transnational Programme were set up within the Ministry for National Economy. It offers a good opportunity to build systematic links between the EUSDR and the institutional structure of the Danube Transnational Programme, as institutions fulfilling the same functions but situated at different governance levels can easily cooperate. Consequently, the logic of the MLG carried out by both institutional systems could provide a solid ground for this linkage.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Territorial cohesion, integrated approach and proper institutional system are essential elements in implementing the EUSDR, as a macro-region can be seen an integrated framework itself. As objectives and challenges are different between the regions - according to the reports from the Commission - distinction should be drawn between the overall concepts and the requirements for the implementation on the project level, taking into account the territorial impacts of sectoral policies and the the possible synergies offered by the integrated approach.

The creation of macro-regions is an organic part of the new territorial paradigm, an important element of which is an integrated and functional approach that intersects public administrative borders. In this context, transnational cooperation can be regarded as a new form of governance, which strongly builds on the method of integrated approach. It requires close coordination of territorial-administrative levels and public policy sectors.

The pivotal role of coordination among different actors in the structural arrangement means that MLG is an appropriate and overarching conceptual tool to describe the vertical relations between different territorial-administrative levels, the integration

across different policy sectors, and the involvement stakeholders from different parts of society. This is something that should handle political leadership and ownership, coordination and management, as well as involve various partners ranging from businesses to NGOs.

Notwithstanding there are still many bottlenecks in professional management and coordination, both at national and macro-regional level. There should be a link between the EU following up to its ambitions and the willingness of citizens to engage in the European democratic process. More ownership (at politics level) and increased stakeholder involvement (at policy level) works as a two-way, interactive process, on the basis of mutual trust and cooperation. The “Vienna Declaration” adopted at an informal meeting of foreign ministers at the occasion of the Annual forum in June 2014 is a very important step in this direction by adopting the concept the annually rotating presidency of by enhancing the hitherto “National Contact Points” to “National Coordinators” and by establishing the secretariat-like Danube Strategy Point in Brussels. However, the emerging multilevel system of platforms (national coordination platforms, stakeholder platforms) seem to be especially available to fill in the function of the hitherto “missing link” between the politics and the policy level, as well as – in a broader sense – between the formal institutional arrangement and the self-organizing networks of stakeholders. The new, more client-oriented and outward visible working structure introduced by the Priority Area (PA) 10 in 2014 could be good practice to fulfil the task of taking over thematic leadership involving the already existing networks (Priority Area 10 2015) The platform should be developed to an instrument at the interface between EUSDR and other EU funding, and the relevant part of the Danube Transnational Programme. In order to strengthen the influence of the platforms, line ministries and Priority Area working communities should hold more informal ministerial meetings as well as individual PA Steering Groups should develop their strategic concepts including relevant targets towards 2020.

The case of Hungary indicates many similarities to the main elements of the overall picture. A new level of policy coordination has great potential, and the “top-down” governance structure for the implementation for the EUSDR seems to be working well up to now. The broad jurisdiction of the Government Commissioner reduces the expectations for PACs to do everything. The national coordination platform and the ad hoc inter-ministerial sub-committees have proven effective for ensuring good communication and cooperation between line ministries. A “bottom-up” process has also started to involve local actors and NGOs in developing projects but in that field still many new international and national networks, coordination platforms provided with the necessary human and financial resources should be created. The centralised working structure doesn’t allow enhanced participation by civil society or local and regional stakeholders up until now. In the absence of a proper institutionalised platform for participation, they are hardly present in the operation of the NAC and the significantly sectoral PACs. On the other hand the large majority of civil society actors lack the necessary capacity required for day-to-day effective work.

Altogether, the concept of territorial governance as a tool for the realisation of territorial cohesion and integrated approach in which highly institutionalised, hierarchical and looser, horizontal, network-based coordination forms coexist seems

to be a “window of opportunity” up to now. As a result, the combined institutional system of the functional macro-regions and its multilevel structure could basically change the mode and form of transnational cooperation and governance.

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EUSDR as a new development tool

Györgyi Nyikos, National University of Public Service, Counselor at the Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU in Brussels

Introduction

The efficiency of public spending has been an important issue throughout the course of history, and in the current economic and financial climate, the questions of on what and how the scarce resources available are spent, and what the impact of this spending is are of particular importance. In connection with the development-oriented utilization of funds, it is of fundamental importance whether the use of public funds is justified, which areas require development and where the best result can be ensured (value for money principle) (Nyikos 2013b). Preparing the next 2014-2020 funding period, an important question is, how to use the limited resources available in the most efficient and sustainable way, especially the sources aimed for development. Improving efficiency and effectiveness of public spending is required by the Stability and Growth Pact, but it is also instrumental to ensure progress towards the agreed goals of the EU2020 Strategy. The assessment of development policy interventions and the question of successful absorption of development funds shifted clearly towards stronger enforcement of aspects efficiency and effectiveness. So on one hand, fiscal stability must be preserved and public deficit contained. On the other hand, the foundations of economic progress must be laid down and the economy must be put on a fast lane of expansion, but the main difficulty of this task is to execute these measures simultaneously.

The multiple challenges confronting Europe – economic, environmental and social – show the need for an integrated and territorial place-based approach to deliver an effective response. As a respond for this fact one of the key elements of the reform is using the integrated approach to increase efficiency with establishing new integrating tools such as common strategy or new territorial development tools (Integrated Territorial Investment ³⁹, Community-led Local Development ⁴⁰) or Joint Action Plan (JAP)⁴¹ for more coordination and less overlap. The objective of better coordination is also important with other EU instruments such as Horizon 2020 or the Connecting Europe Facility. An integrated approach is multi-dimensional and may mean going beyond traditional administrative boundaries. It also may require greater willingness from different levels of government to co-operate and co-ordinate actions in order to achieve shared goals. Another important element of the cohesion policy reform is to reinforce cooperation across borders and make the setting up of more cross-border

³⁹ Integrated Territorial Investment is a tool to implement territorial strategies in an integrated way, allows Member States to implement Operational Programmes in a cross-cutting way and to draw on funding from several priority axes of one or more Operational Programmes to ensure the implementation of an integrated strategy for a specific territory.

⁴⁰ Community-led Local Development is a specific tool for use at sub-regional level, which is carried out through integrated and multi-sectoral area-based local development strategies and allows the integrated use of the Funds.

⁴¹ A Joint Action Plan (JAP) is a part of one or several priority axes or operational programmes implemented by a results-based approach, in order to achieve specific objectives agreed jointly between the Member State and the Commission.

projects easier, thereby also ensuring macro-regional strategies like the Danube and the Baltic Sea to be supported by national and regional programmes.

The question is how the macro-regional strategies - as a new development tool - can fit in the conditions? How can they help to achieve the common goals?

The case of the EUSDR

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Commission in December 2010 and endorsed by the European Council in 2011. The EU Strategy for the Danube Region is the second EU macro-regional strategy after the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The strategy was designed to take advantage of synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives across the Danube region and thus improve connectivity within the region as well as with the rest of Europe.

Connecting the Danube Region	
1. To improve mobility and multimodality: a. Inland waterways b. Road, rail and air links	"Improved travel times between major cities" "Multimodal Danube river port terminals"
2. To encourage more sustainable energy	"EU2020 climate and energy targets"
3. To promote culture and tourism	"Develop green tourist products along the regions"
Protecting the Environment in the Danube Region	
4. To restore and maintain the quality of waters	"Elaborate sub-basin management plans"
5. To manage environmental risk	"Implement flood risk management plans"
6. To preserve biodiversity, landscape, air, soils	"Secure viable populations indigenous fish species"
Building Prosperity in the Danube Region	
7. To develop knowledge society	"Full broadband access in the Region by 2013"
8. To support competitiveness	"Patents +50%"
9. To invest in people and skills	Tertiary education +40% for aged 30-34"
Strengthening the Danube Region	
10. To step up institutional capacity & cooperation	"Benchmarks for reducing bureaucracy"
11. To work together to promote security	Cooperation between law enforcement actors"

Table 1: Priority Areas of the EUSDR

Macro-regional strategies are a new form of regional cooperation and it is clear that the EUSDR has created valuable cooperation platforms, which did not exist in the past:

- transport ministers now meet to work on the issue of water levels, after the situation that brought navigation to a complete standstill on the lower Danube in autumn 2012 and a research project is working on how the Danube fleet can be more effectively modernized,
- police chiefs of the 14 Danube Region countries are setting up an anti-corruption platform,
- projects are under preparation or implementation in the areas of energy and environment (such as the improvement of gas interconnections (e.g. between Slovakia and Hungary), a better use of biomass energy, and the restoration of waterway sediment balance), a teaching programme for intercultural dialogue is being tested in schools to promote the different Danube cultures,

- the first Danube Financing Dialogue has been held in Vienna, gathering representatives of financial institutions and SMEs to improve credit flows and identify new business opportunities in the Danube Region and a second Danube Business Forum was held in November this year, which brought together Danube enterprises, promoting links to universities and research institutes,
- the Budapest Danube Contact Point set up by the EIB and Hungary provides assistance for coordination and macro-regional optimization of transboundary energy, environment, and flood management and transportation projects.

The rationale behind the initiative is that a lot of important issues cannot be dealt with by countries alone: they require cooperation with others. This is the case in the fields of transport, energy, the environment, the economy and security, and these are exactly the priorities of the EUSDR. This cooperation is partially done at the EU level, but the macro-regional level is sometimes better to address common challenges and opportunities, which can be identified over a large but coherent zone. This cooperation is not easy, because of the different languages, and the administration is often nationally oriented and sometimes interests are diverging as well.

To achieve the objective of result-orientation, there is also the question of alignment, critical mass and impact. One of the tools, which can achieve an efficient and sustainable way to finance and develop programmes and projects is the coordinated, integrated approach: which allows for the reconciliation of- different types of – sectoral – objectives and aspects of development (e.g. social, environmental, infrastructural, economic aspects etc.),

- different levels of governance (at the EU, Member State, region or local level) (Nyikos 2011).

In the framework of the EUSDR through the integrated approach and multi-level governance, an optimization of policy mixes can be achieved. The integrated approach therefore offers both, a more effective and a more efficient solution to implementation issues. While, clearly, the integrated approach requires more effort in terms of planning and implementation as regards time and workload, the result is often that more well-grounded plans can be produced with increased ownership of the objectives of the project. Thus, facilitating truly integrated programmes and projects requires a shift in attitude, not only towards results and objectives, but less on absorption and expenditure. It also requires a stronger coordination and partnership at all levels between the various stakeholders.

The coordinated and integrated approach can much be helped by macro-regional work. The EUSDR identifies the main priorities and challenge for the region where better coordination of policies and alignment of already existing financing instruments is needed, but is based on the guiding principles of no new EU funds, no additional EU formal structures, no new EU legislation while relying on smart coordinated governance approach and synergy effects: better implementation of existing legislation, optimal use of existing financial sources and better use of existing institutions.

Following the EUSDR does not come with extra EU finance but it is supported from the resources already available according to an integrated approach. Countries may also make use of the funding they receive through EU cohesion policy, other EU programmes and financial instruments, and various international financial institutions. The EUSDR could and shall be implemented by mobilizing and aligning existing funding to its objectives, where appropriate and in line with overall frameworks. There are national, regional and local resources. Indeed, accessing and combining funding, especially from public and private sources below the EU-level, is crucial. The EUSDR has already led to better use of existing funds. For example, the European Framework Programme for Research recently launched a call specifically targeted at innovation in the inland navigation shipping sector, in which projects from the Danube Region were encouraged.

The EUSDR is governed by a multi-level governance structure.

The European Council as the highest political body of the EU gave the mandate to the European Commission to prepare the EUSDR, and endorsed it in June 2011. The European Commission as the executive of the EU prepared the EUSDR and helps to implement it facilitating and supporting actions of the participating countries, coordinates it at the policy level. The High Level Group on macro-regional strategies is made up of official representatives from all EU Member States and assists the Commission in the policy coordination of the Strategy. Each Priority Area is jointly coordinated by two participating countries (or regions), who work in consultation with the Commission, relevant EU agencies and regional bodies. Also much attention has been paid to developing an appropriate structure also for the operative work. Coordinators for the Priority Areas have been appointed (for each Priority Area, each of the two responsible countries designates a Priority Area Coordinator⁴²), assisted by Steering Groups gathering experts on each theme. The National Contact Points (NCPs) coordinate and keep an overview of the participation of their country in the implementation of the EUSDR including all eleven Priority Areas. Goals for the Danube Region could also now being formulated in a coherent and transnational way through to the EUSDR. The question is how it will function in practice. Can this structure and mechanism work together with the cohesion policy, with HORIZON 2020 and further policy institutions or not? Accordingly, the ownership and the internal implementation structures of the countries for EUSDR should be reinforced also; they should reflect national characteristics and ensure horizontal coordination.

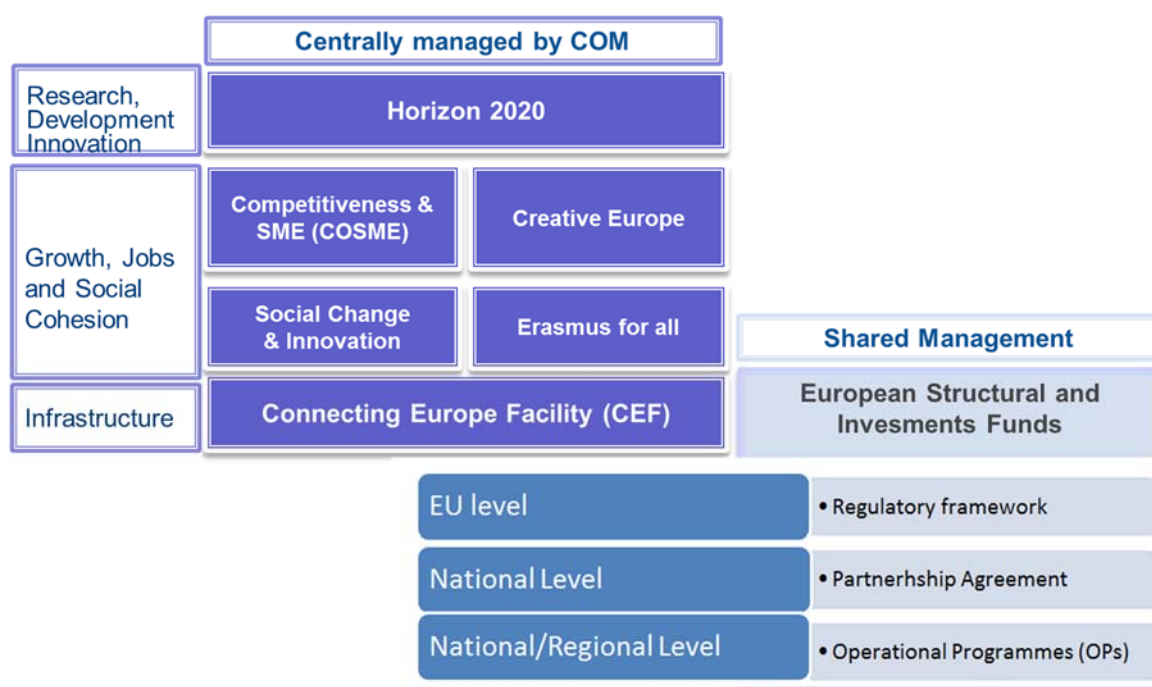
In December 2012 the European Commission proposed to create a new transnational cooperation programme for the 2014-2020 period. The geography of the new Danube programme matches exactly with the territory of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region adopted in 2011. The macro-regional strategy and the transnational programme are two different instruments developed for similar aims but acting on different levels and principles. Their matching territory and goals provide great opportunities for cooperation between the two: besides contributing to the Strategy's

⁴² The Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) ensure the implementation of the Action Plan defined for the Priority Area by agreeing on planning, with targets, indicators and timetables, and by making sure there is effective cooperation between project promoters, programmes and funding sources. They also provide technical assistance and advice. The coordinators work in consultation with the Commission, and relevant EU agencies and national/regional bodies.

thematic goals by realizing relevant cooperation projects, the programme might also support the institutional cooperation of stakeholders and institutions of the Danube Strategy. The Danube Programme 2014-2020 will support the development and implementation of the EUSDR. Thematic priorities of the Danube programme will be defined in line with the relevant draft EC legislation, the national priorities of Partner States, and reflect the needs of the programme area. Topics to be addressed by programme priorities may include many of traditional transnational cooperation topics, like innovation, transport, environment, etc. Implementation of the programme will be coordinated by joint structures set up in Budapest, Hungary. Implementing structures of the programme are designed in a new institutional setup, taking into account simplification and transnationality as guiding principles. Project selection procedures could be reviewed to support the agreed aims as well.

Cohesion Policy is at the heart of the EU development, and will be the main investment mechanism for the delivery of the Europe 2020 in the next decade, however, with other EU-funded programmes defines spending for priorities that are geared to sustainable growth, jobs and competitiveness in line with the EU's growth strategy Europe 2020.

1. Table: EU policies and instruments to support EU2020



Source:

As far as the macro-regional strategies are concerned, important steps have been taken to improve support for the macro-regional approach. The cohesion regulations propose that macro-regional strategies are embedded throughout the programming process (the Common Strategic Framework, the Partnership contracts, and all operational Programmes, as appropriate) and when developing and implementing the policy in all respects. The Member States and other relevant authorities concerned are encouraged to embed these objectives into the programming documents of the new 2014-2020 programming period in a coordinated way taking

into account possibilities foreseen in the Common Strategic Framework for 2014–2020 inter alia by cooperative governance arrangements and specific mechanisms like giving priority in the selection process to the operations deriving from these strategies or by organizing specific calls for them.

But not only the cohesion policy, also other policies and funds managed by the Commission have to align the different existing EU and other funds and instruments to the goals of the macro-regional strategies where appropriate. It is crucial using all the different sources in an integrated and coordinated way. Better integration of instruments for funding always provides superior results. This concerns coordination mechanisms between those responsible for the different funds in each Member State, but also between those responsible for other policy areas and instruments such as research and development as well as innovation and transport.

The General Affairs Council on 22th October 2013 was informed of the achievements and added value of European Union macro-regional strategies and had an exchange of views on experiences gained within that framework. It adopted Council conclusions on added value of macro-regional strategies. It describes the added value of EU macro-regional strategies, analyzes the lessons learnt during the implementation of the existing macro-regional strategies and gives recommendations on the future prospects of the concept. Until now, the EU has initiated two macro-regional strategies, one for the Baltic Sea Region and the other for the Danube Region. In addition, the European Council has invited the Commission to present an EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region by the end of 2014. As a new element to address, questions raised from the practical operational level, to maintain focus and relevance the Member States and the Commission are encouraged to introduce suitable mechanism, such as sunset clauses or agreed specific criteria, for those priority areas/horizontal actions that seriously fail to deliver progress on performance and added value, with the option of revising their content or on mutual consent merging them with another priority area/horizontal action and if that fails reducing their number.

Conclusion

In light of the above a macro-regional strategy is an integrated framework to address common challenges in a given geographical area. So far the macro-regional strategies are proving their added value both strategically and politically by improving existing cooperation mechanisms and networks and promoting where relevant the development of new ones within and between participating countries leading to greater coordination and efficiency of the efforts. One of the key issues is the appropriate planning and programming (more important, then earlier), which should be consistent with the strategic goals of the Community, the Member States and the regional and local plans (Nyikos, 2013a). The other is the common effort to increase the coordination and cooperation between the different stakeholders.

Therefore, it seems that better spending as well as promoting multilevel governance by encouraging cooperation between national, regional and local levels and between public and private sectors can be a result of the implementation of the macro-regional strategies. The decisive point is that whether the stakeholder will and would cooperate with each other in the implementation.

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Old bridges, new paths and current dynamics - Baden-Württemberg's institutionalized cultural, scientific and educational relations with Hungary and the Middle Danube Basin⁴³

Doris Orgonas, Eberhard-Karls-University Tübingen

Introduction

Approaching the field of institutionalized cultural, scientific and educational relations between the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg, Hungary and the Middle Danube Basin, one experiences a vast range of institutions based in Baden-Württemberg, Hungary and the settlement areas of the Danube Swabians. These settlement areas are based in the Middle Danube Basin and pertain to the states of Hungary, Romania, Croatia and Serbia. The research carried out in this field is based on empirical data as well as written sources. The article has the aim to present and depict the institutions which lay their emphasis on cultural exchange, education or scientific research⁴⁴, are counseled or supported by Baden-Württemberg and located in either the German federal state or Hungary. The institutionalization within this field can be assigned to three periods from 1953 and shall be circumstantiated in the following.

Old bridges and new paths?

Partners from Baden-Württemberg and Hungary often praise their strong ties in speeches at jubilee celebrations or in their accompanying publications. In these cases, there is frequent reference to the “long lasting tradition of mutual relations”. Allusions even back to medieval times are being drawn upon. Also, the major movement of the Danube Swabians from Hungary to Baden-Württemberg as a result of World War II has been interpreted as the “resettlement” into the old homeland, the alleged point of their original emigration.

These interpretations are – from a scientific point of view – ahistorical. They did construct togetherness, though, and helped the German expellees to integrate, to accept their fate and arrange with their loss of home. The fact that the German minority, which was displaced or fled from Hungary as a consequence of World War II, settled mainly in Baden-Württemberg did have a sustainable influence on the development of the relationship between the southwestern German federal state and Hungary. The reason for this geographic relocation into Baden-Württemberg was more practical though. The US allied forces ruling over Württemberg wanted to achieve a repatriation of the German population into the territory of Germany as quickly as possible. A simple horizontal shift of the members of the German minority appeared to be the quickest and most sincere option (Beer 2011: 99-103). The timeframe of the examined relations between Baden-Württemberg, Hungary and the countries with Danube Swabian settlements spreads from 1953 to the present. Within this time span, three waves of intensified relations can be detected. These

⁴³ The paper is based on the survey conducted by the author within the framework of her PhD at the department of historical and cultural anthropology at the Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen.

⁴⁴ In this context “scientific” refers exclusively to historical and social science.

rapprochements are adjunct with the establishment of cultural, educational and scientific institutions concerned with the exchange between the partners.

The major starting point of institutionalized relations was the release of the Federal Refugees Act (Bundesvertriebenengesetz) and its § 96 in 1953. This law, which is still in use, guarantees the maintenance of the cultural assets of the German displaced persons and refugees as well as the support of their scientific research. Based upon this law, the Danube Swabians, organized in strong stakeholder groups – the so-called “Landsmannschaften” – requested the establishment of social and historical research centers and representational institutions by the state of Baden-Württemberg. The initially heterogeneous groups were able to successfully implement their claims (Beer 2004: 7). From that point until the recent past several scientific and cultural institutions, concerned with the topics of the Danube Swabians and their settlement areas in the Middle Danube Basin, were supported or built up by the state of Baden-Württemberg.⁴⁵

One may wonder which influence the representation of the German minority has on the present relations and current dynamics between Hungary, Baden-Württemberg and the Danube Region. Through the era of isolation of the Eastern Bloc and the communist rule in Hungary, the Danube Swabians, who had left the country after the war, kept up the ties to their former homeland. The exchange was possible because of the relatively liberal rule in Hungary. From the 1990s the established research and representation of the German minority in the social sciences went through a scientification, de-emotionalization and became more factual (Wissenschaftsrat 2013: 85). This is also true for the work of the research institutions in Baden-Württemberg. As a result, German culture and history in Southeastern Europe is at present being contextualized into the greater frame of European migration history by the protagonists in this field.

The so-called “experiencing generation” is diminishing and the institutions reach out to a wider and also younger audience, which has not experienced life in Southeastern Europe first hand. Every 5th inhabitant of Baden-Württemberg has biographical ties to former Eastern Europe through displacement or escape (Beer 2012: 514). As could be depicted through field research, the interest in German history and culture in Southeastern Europe and the region itself shows in well attended lectures and seminars held by the research centers which are integrated into university structures.

Throughout the years, and especially after 1989, the scientific and cultural institutions widened their networks in Hungary, Romania, Croatia and Serbia. A *cultural turn* has also taken place in this area of research, and *relationships of exchange*, *questions of ethnicity and inter ethnicity* as well as of *commemorative culture* are now taken into

⁴⁵ Institut für Volkskunde der Deutschen des östlichen Europa, Freiburg (1951 respectively 1964), Haus der Heimat des Landes Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart (1976), Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, Stuttgart (1988), Institut für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde, Tübingen (1987), Donauschwäbisches Zentralmuseum, Ulm (2000), Zentrum zur Erforschung deutscher Geschichte und Kultur in Südosteuropa an der Universität Tübingen (2012). The Bundesvertriebenengesetz is a state law, which is also executed on federal level. The quality and quantity of its implementation is left to each state. Baden-Württemberg, next to Bavaria, is one of the states, which to this day is very active in the field and encourages and initiates new projects concerning the representation of German culture and history in former Eastern Europe.

account. Thereby, research became credible and open to partners in the region also beyond the remaining German minority. Through scholarship and sponsoring programmes the institutions, such as the *Institut für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde* based in Tübingen, the *Haus der Heimat des Landes Baden-Württemberg* or the *Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung des Landes Baden-Württemberg* in Stuttgart, support young academics of all ethnic backgrounds and were able to build up solid networks of scientists and institutions in the region.

The deconstruction of the Eastern Bloc

Experiencing the gradual decomposition of the Eastern Bloc, Baden-Württemberg extended its existing ties to Hungary, also through the paths set up by the Danube Swabians. Baden-Württemberg accompanied the country on its way to democracy. For instance, a mixed government commission between Baden-Württemberg and Hungary was set up. It was the first of its kind and still serves as a role model in the cooperation with other Southeastern European countries and their preparations to access the European Union.

This era of new liberty on a common democratic basis can be identified as a second phase with strong impulses on the mutual relations. In the so-called “years of euphoria” (Erdödy 1997: 9) new educational, cultural and research institutions were built up in Hungary and Baden-Württemberg alike. The way for the intensification of the connections was smoothed by the fact that Hungary was the first country of former Eastern Europe that in 1990 officially apologized for the expulsion of its German minority after the war.

In the first years after the political change the setting up of economic relations played an important role. Regarding cultural cooperation, most importantly German language programs were initiated. One of the new institutions was the German School Budapest, which opened as early as 1990. Until now Baden-Württemberg is represented in the foundation board of the school. The German federal state was also strongly involved in the modernization and restructuring of the educational centre in Baja, with its tradition rooting back to the 1950s. In this case, too, Baden-Württemberg is represented in the foundation board until the present. The research centre Collegium Budapest was established in 1992 and, in 2002, as another result of the “euphoria of change”, the German language Andrassy University in Budapest was founded.

In 1990 Hungary established a cultural institute in Stuttgart. Germany is therefore the only country to hold two Hungarian cultural institutes (the second one is located in Berlin). This can be traced back to the fact that the Danube Swabians as well as Baden-Württemberg’s officials welcomed and pushed the idea of the institute in Stuttgart.

The high number of twinning programs on municipal level is characteristic for the relationship between Baden-Württemberg and Hungary. Even before the fall of the iron curtain, first partnerships were established. On the one hand, this was possible because of the already fairly liberal political tone in Hungary, but also because Danube Swabians kept up relations with their hometowns on the civil society level. Through travel and personal contacts the permeability of the iron curtain was kept up

even during the years of communist rule in Hungary and Romania. After the political turn, civil society and the interest groups of the Danube Swabians initiated town partnerships even more vigorously.

In general, the interest groups of German expellees have the fame of having revanchist views. This is not so much the case with the Danube Swabians because their area of settlement had never been part of the *German Reich*, which is a further reason for their positive relation to their “old home” (Retterath 2009).

The collapse of the communist Eastern Bloc brought about a heightened interest and recognition on behalf of the West of what had been up to then generally called “Eastern Europe”. This turn in perception is also reflected in a more differentiated naming. Concepts as “Northeastern Europe”, “Central-Eastern Europe” and “Southeastern Europe” became common in the West (Sundhaussen 2000: 92-105). This change of naming was accompanied by the consciousness of “Eastern Europe” as a heterogeneous region. The development programs initiated by Baden-Württemberg in the 1990s concentrated on Hungary and Romania, because affiliations to the two countries already existed. These initiatives were referred to as “aid for Eastern Europe”. By the end of the 1990s, most development help programs for Hungary had either been cancelled or shifted to countries further east. Today, an equal exchange between the partners is intended.

From bilateral relations to the macro-regional EUSDR

As sketched out here, Baden-Württemberg has had multilateral relations with the Danube Region for years, with Hungary being a toehold. At the end of the 1990s, existing paths were revitalized. Ulm can be identified as a nucleus of the Danube activities in Baden-Württemberg. Until today, it is also a central commemorative space for the Danube Swabians. It could be argued that the symbolically charged history of the city was the starting point of the strong engagement of Ulm in the EUSDR. Ulm has emancipated itself from the mere legacy of the Danube Swabians and had a major role in the multilateralization of Baden-Württemberg’s regional cooperation towards a new dimension of macro-regional collaboration on a contemporary, modern European level. Cultural and educational institutions like the Donaubüro Ulm (2002) and the European Danube Academy (2008), as well as the International Danube Festival (1998) have been established in Ulm in the dawn of what we today know as the EUSDR. These institutions have actively taken part in the development of the strategy and raised the awareness for the region within the population of Baden-Württemberg. With Ulm being an active centre, Baden-Württemberg and its partner Hungary have been involved early in the development of the strategy on both municipal and federal level.

Conclusion

The examination made clear that the institutions have heterogeneous forms of organizations. Their emergence has to be regarded within its respective historical and political contexts. Since these institutions are supported by the state of Baden-Württemberg and are active in cross border relations, the federal state extended its competences regarding foreign affairs. The south-western German state is an

adequate partner in the exchange with Hungary as well as in geographic size as in economic power.

The institutions and organizations in the survey concerned with the representation of German history and culture see their work in the context of transnational integration towards the Middle Danube Basin. Experts have emerged in this field who have profound knowledge of the history, the culture and the languages of the region. Due to their strictly scientific approach and a broad interpretation of culture they can and should by all means be considered credible partners and specialists in the exchange with the Danube Region.

Even though having different focuses with regard to contents and functions as well as regional focuses the described and examined institutions know each other well and cooperate repeatedly. The potential for synergies could be intensified though, especially considering the existing infrastructure with its experts of the field. One reason for this restraint can be the attention on economic issues within the EUSDR.

The first actions concerning the Danube and later the EUSDR in Ulm started out in the field of culture. The Danube Festival with its city fair character manages to attract a vast range of visitor and to heighten the awareness of Ulm's population towards the river and its neighbouring countries.

After 2004 all the mutual foreign policy goals of the two partners Hungary and Baden-Württemberg had been reached. It was thus a consequent step to advance the mutual relations within the expanded framework of this multilateral macroregional joint strategy.

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Part 3: Scientific Support to the Danube Region

The Danube macro-regional strategy and the EU Research and Innovation initiatives for the period 2014-2020

Dimitri Corpakis; Head of Unit, Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation, Directorate for the Innovation Union and the European Research Area, Directorate General for Research and Innovation, European Commission;

Annamaria Zonno, Seconded National Expert, Unit on Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation, Directorate for the Innovation Union and the European Research Area, Directorate General for Research and Innovation, European Commission

The views expressed are purely those of the writers and may not in any circumstances be regarded as stating an official position of the European Commission.

The concept of a macro-regional strategy like the one that focuses on the Danube (where all relevant countries are linked by the presence of a major river) has a strong potential of leading the cooperating regions to focus their future investments on areas of shared and complementary interest, which could result in significant gains for regional development, growth and jobs. For this to happen, a well-thought approach is required that would be able to mobilise and optimise the available funding instruments at national, regional and European level. Since the most promising area for development in Europe lies with the knowledge economy and innovation, two major funding sources at European level stand out: Horizon 2020, the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (that allocates funding only on a competitive basis) and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

The EU Regulations for the period 2014-2020 introduce the concept of **synergies between the different EU programmes** with the aim of increasing the impact of EU funding. EU Programmes are designed to contribute in a complementary way to implement the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Content wise, the programmes are mutually supportive in several ways as each of them contributes to address specific issues.

The added value of searching for synergies is that several integrated actions can be put in place. As an example, one can have a pre-commercial procurement of tele-care equipment which is launched by a regional authority by means of Cohesion funds, which is complemented by some (FP7 or Horizon 2020) European project aimed at strengthening the knowledge exchanges or joint research projects on that specific innovation domain. Obviously participation to Horizon 2020 will require the participation to competitive call (being successful in such a call is not at all certain for any company or university, since competition is very high). What needs to be stressed here is that a combined use of the different funding sources can contribute to more effective interventions and maximise the added value of EU funding for research and innovation on the ground. There is indeed a huge potential in the proper concentration

of investments that can be instrumental for reaching specific goals of R&D investment in a given country or region.

Already in the current programming period (2007-2013) there have been several virtuous examples of combination of funding sources where the upgrading or research infrastructure would be funded by the Structural Funds and a series of integrated activities to increase research capacity (through staff exchanges with other research institutions, recruitment of experienced researchers, equipment upgrades and conferences) would be funded by programmes such as Research Potential (REGPOT) in the frame of the FP7 Capacities Programme. Other common cases are those in which R&I activities have been funded by the Member States / Regions and supported by the Structural Funds while at the same time the same stakeholders engaged in research and innovation strategies (increasing their transnational connectivity and knowledge exchange) through the FP7 action on Regions of Knowledge under the well-known model of Triple Helix (collaboration between industry, academia and government). In the future programming period such combination of funding will be possible even for the same project, however for different project components. A guide on “Synergies between ESIF and Horizon 2020” is currently in preparation by the European Commission services and will be available before the end of 2013.

Strengthening synergies will allow overcoming barriers and silo effects where local and regional dimensions of research and innovation activities (mostly funded under the Structural Funds) were completely disconnected from relevant actions that were funded by the Framework Programme. Such separation meant that investment funds for research and innovation would go in several and dispersed initiatives that were disconnected and did not have internal coherence and thus significant effects on the ground.

Additionally, the issue of building critical mass, on the basis of entrepreneurial and research and innovation capacities will be critical in the next programming period. **Smart specialisation** strategies will be established to guide support for research and innovation in the future national and regional ESIF funding programmes during 2014-20. This is a new approach that gives priority to investments that take account of the strengths of a country or region. As a result, smart specialisation focuses on identifying the most important opportunities for growth which can be supported by research and innovation. Smart specialisation encourages diversification to related areas of activity; the creation of connections across sectors and the development of skills, in order to increase the capacity of countries and regions to undertake research and innovation. Once a well- focused territorial development strategy is in place, a subsequent concentration of investments would allow more significant impact on regional and national economies. Currently Member States and regions are drafting the Strategic Policy Framework for **Smart Specialisation** that is now ex-ante conditionality for all future investments on Research and Innovation, to be supported under Cohesion policy.

Future R&I funding opportunities

Turning now to future funding opportunities, our flagship programme for research and innovation at European level for the next programming period, **Horizon 2020**, will make an important difference for stimulating ground breaking research and igniting innovation at national and regional level. Horizon 2020 is a radically simplified framework programme with a substantially increased budget (a little over EUR 80 billion) that will open new opportunities, especially for small and medium size companies, thus favouring players at regional level. Horizon 2020 is also challenge-driven, less prescriptive and by far more innovative than its predecessors. With its three pillars Horizon 2020 will strengthen the EU's position in science, will deal with industrial leadership in innovation with major investment in key technologies, greater access to capital and support for SMEs.

Horizon 2020 will provide funding to help address major concerns shared by all Europeans such as climate change, developing sustainable transport and mobility, making renewable energy more affordable, ensuring food safety and security, or coping with the challenge of an ageing population. The approach chosen for tackling societal challenges will contribute to bridge the gap between research and the market by, for example by helping innovative enterprises develop their technological breakthroughs into viable products with real commercial potential. This market-driven approach will include creating partnerships with the private sector and Member States to bring together the desired results.

Together with Horizon 2020, regions have to seize the major opportunity of the fully revamped and modernised Cohesion policy, to make the most of European funding for research and innovation and turn knowledge into competitive advantage. The Commission's effort on introducing the concept of Smart Specialisation will certainly bear its fruits, through a collective, collegial effort by all Europeans, for growth and jobs.

Other interesting initiatives which could be of potential interest of the Danube strategy's partners are the **Public Private Partnerships**. These are aimed at enabling a long-term, strategic approach to research and innovation and reduce uncertainties. They provide a legal structure to pool resources and to gather critical mass, which enables a scale of effort that individual firms would not be able to achieve including through smart specialization and combination of Horizon 2020 and European Structural and Investment funding. Moreover they make research and innovation funding across the EU more efficient by sharing financial, human and infrastructure resources, thereby reducing the risk of fragmentation, and leading to economies of scale and reduced costs for all partners involved. The Public Private Partnerships are tools to better address complex challenges as they help develop interdisciplinary approaches and allow for a more efficient sharing of knowledge and expertise, thus facilitating the creation of an internal market for innovative products and services, by advancing jointly on critical issues such as access to finance, standardization and norm setting.

At EU level public-private partnerships in research and innovation were first introduced in the current 7th research Framework Programme (FP7) through the Joint

Technology Initiatives (JTIs), whereby the Union and industry jointly fund and implement certain areas of FP7. Five JTIs have been established under FP7, in the areas of aeronautics (Clean Sky), pharmaceutical research (Innovative Medicines Initiative), fuel cells and hydrogen (FCH), embedded systems (ARTEMIS) and nano electronics (ENIAC).

Each Joint Technology Initiatives proposed has clearly defined objectives to achieve breakthroughs in the following areas:

- *Innovative Medicines*: to improve European citizens' health and wellbeing by providing new and more effective diagnostics and treatments such as new antimicrobial treatments;
- *Fuel Cells and Hydrogen*: to develop commercially viable, clean, solutions that use hydrogen as an energy carrier and of fuel cells as energy converters;
- *Clean Sky*: to radically reduce the environmental impact of the next generation of aircraft;
- *Bio-based Industries*: to develop new and competitive bio-based value chains that replace the need for fossil fuels and have a strong impact on rural development;

Electronic Components and Systems: to keep Europe at the forefront of electronic components and systems and bridge faster the gap to exploitation.

These five Joint Technology Initiatives are expected to mobilize a total investment of over EUR 17 billion, of which the EU budget contribution will be up to EUR 6.4 billion.

Complementing the Joint Technology Initiatives, the Commission in FP7 also engaged in structured partnerships with the private sector called **Contractual public-private partnerships**, aimed at seeking direct input into the preparation of the work programmes in areas which were defined upfront and which are of great industrial relevance. Unlike JTIs, such partnerships do not require additional legislation because the funding is implemented by the Commission through the normal procedures.

Building on this experience, the Horizon 2020 proposals also allow for such partnerships. To improve transparency, these partnerships will be based on a contractual agreement between the Commission and the industry partners, setting out the objectives, commitments, key performance indicators and outputs to be delivered.

Contractual public-private partnerships are being considered in the following areas:

- Factories of the Future;
- Energy-efficient Buildings;
- Green Vehicles;
- Future Internet
- Sustainable Process Industry;
- Robotics;
- Photonics;
- High Performance Computing.

For each of these areas, industry proposals are expected to provide clear roadmaps, developed in open consultation with other interested parties, which describe the vision, research and innovation content and expected impact, including in terms of growth and jobs. They are also expected to clarify the nature and extent of the industry's commitments and the leverage effect of the public-private partnership. They will focus particularly on close to market activities.

It is then evident that the Danube strategy could be used to identify areas in both funding instruments that present opportunities for growth, based on knowledge assets, in a context of smart specialisation. Numerous possibilities for involvement are available, either in the context of well-thought and articulated Operational Programmes (that can now also engage in other countries or regions if this is well justified) or in the context of transnational partnerships, successfully bidding under an Horizon 2020 Call for proposals. Interactions and synergies between these two areas are also desirable and feasible, if well planned.

The overall goal of such an approach would then be to promote cooperation between the Danube regions with a view to increasing regional economic growth, by capitalising on different types of regional approaches and building stronger transnational networks and clusters, with an emphasis on activities linked to areas identified in their research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation.

The list of the EU initiatives cannot be considered exhaustive. Others include COSME, Creative Europe, as well as other programmes of International Financial Institutions (like for instance the World Bank). The Danube strategy's stakeholders should be able to hook to those EU initiatives which are coherent with their plans and maximise the synergies of funds. According to the legislative package for 2014-2020, macro-regional strategies should be clearly mentioned in the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes. The macro-regional dimension should be a part of this overall strategic thinking.

Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy of the Joint Research Centre – Concept Paper, European Commission

Aurelie Gommenginger, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission

Introduction on the JRC initiative and its possible relations with the Danube Strategy Research Network:

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission is coordinating an initiative aiming to provide scientific support to the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and focusing on four vertical priorities: environment protection, irrigation and agricultural development, navigability and energy production. As a transversal priority, the initiative also aims to support the development of Smart Specialisation strategies for innovation in the Danube Region.

The initiative was launched in close cooperation with key scientific partners of the Danube Region. Through an integrated approach relying on different flagship clusters, the JRC and its scientific partners will gather essential scientific expertise and data to help decision-makers and other stakeholders of the Danube Region to identify the policy measures and actions needed for the implementation of the EU Strategy of the Danube Region.

The JRC 'Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy' and the 'Danube Strategy Research Network' (DSRN) pursue similar objectives in the sense that they both aim to foster cooperation between researchers in the Danube Region. Far from overlapping or creating any duplication, both initiatives are actually rather complementary. While the DSRN mainly aims to stimulate exchanges the concept and governance of macroregional strategies with a focus on social, cultural and economic sciences, the JRC initiative aims to address clearly identified scientific needs related to the implementation of the EUSDR and based on a limited number of scientific priorities. Further contacts and possible synergies between the JRC initiative and the DSRN activities can therefore be envisaged in the future, especially in relation to the governance and interdisciplinary approach to the EUSDR.

The JRC and its support to the EUSDR

Context

The Danube Region covers parts of nine EU countries (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania) and five non-EU countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine and Moldova).

The region is facing several challenges, such as environmental threats, insufficient energy and transport connections, uneven socio-economic development as well as shortcomings in safety and security. Better coordination and cooperation between the countries and key players are needed to address these challenges.

It is to build and capitalise on potential synergies that the European Commission - at the request of the European Council - proposed a European Union Strategy for the

Danube Region⁴⁶ in December 2010. The Strategy was developed jointly with the Danube Region countries and stakeholders.

The objective of this macroregional strategy is to tackle the challenges and priorities of the Danube Region in an integrated manner, leading to concrete results and a better future for the region and its citizens. It aims to develop into a durable cooperation framework, allowing policy makers to improve their cooperation and thus increase the effectiveness of policies, at EU, national and local level.

The European Council endorsed the EU Strategy for the Danube Region in June 2011, calling on all relevant actors to implement it without delay. The JRC responded to this call of the Council by launching the 'Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy' initiative.

Rationale and Objective

The JRC's Scientific Support initiative contributes to the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) in two different ways. Firstly, it addresses the scientific needs related to the implementation of the EUSDR and thereby helps decision-makers and other stakeholders to identify the policy needs and actions needed for the implementation of the Strategy. Secondly, it contributes to the reinforcement of ties and cooperation amongst the scientific community of the Danube Region.

Addressing the scientific needs related to the implementation of the EUSDR

As the scientific arm of the European Commission, the JRC's association to the EUSDR comes natural because many of the challenges identified in the Strategy relate to areas where scientific support is crucial to ensure sound policy implementation.

The JRC has a strong scientific expertise on the Danube Region, acquired throughout different actions. For example, the JRC has developed the European Flood Awareness System (EFAS) in order to provide the national institutes and the European Commission with information on possible river flooding to occur within three or more days. The JRC also maintains the Danube Soil Information System through which it collects soil data from the countries that intersect the Danube river basin and provides valuable information on the status of soils and the evolution of soil erosion. Moreover, the JRC has extensive expertise when it comes to monitoring the quality of waters and emerging pollutants in surface and ground waters.

Out of the eleven Priority Areas identified in the Strategy, seven are areas where the JRC already has acquired scientific expertise and can provide an active scientific support. The Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy will directly or indirectly contribute to the Priority Areas (PAs) on Waterways (PA1a), Energy (PA2), Water

⁴⁶ Communication of the European Commission (COM(2010)715) and Action Plan (SEC(2010)1489) of 8 December 2011.

Quality (PA4), Environmental Risks (PA5), Biodiversity, landscapes, quality of air and soils (PA6), Knowledge Society and ICT (PA7) and Competitiveness (PA8).

Moreover, the JRC can promote a cross-cutting approach to tackling the scientific challenges related to the implementation of the above-mentioned Priority Areas of the EUSDR. The JRC has indeed a broad overview on different scientific fields of expertise related to the Danube Region. It can therefore provide the expertise needed to ensure that the interdependencies between different Priority Areas are duly assessed and taken into account when implementing the EUSDR. It will also contribute to reinforcing the consistency of the overall EUSDR approach in scientific-related matters by preventing the duplication of efforts and investments across different projects.

Strengthening the scientific cooperation in the Danube Region

The EUSDR is anchored in the Europe 2020 Strategy and aims to help achieve the long-term objectives of the EU, namely smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. By 2020, the Strategy aims to make the Danube Region one of the most attractive in Europe.

To achieve this challenging goal, the important socio-economic disparities across the different countries of the Region have to be reduced. In the field of research and innovation, the Danube Region counts a few countries - like Germany and Austria - whose performance indicators in the field of R&D intensity and participation in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) are amongst the highest in the Europe, but many of the other countries of the Region rank amongst the lowest performing countries in this regard⁴⁷. As recommended by the EUSDR, to overcome such disparities and to stimulate excellence in research and development, cooperation between scientific actors should be enhanced and incentives for stronger cooperation should be developed.

The JRC's Scientific Support to the Danube Region was launched and is implemented in close cooperation with the key scientific actors of the Danube Region. In this sense, it helps to build scientific networks contributing to enhance the collaboration between the scientific communities of the different countries of the Danube Region. This process will eventually facilitate the increased exchange of knowledge between the highest and lowest performing countries in the fields of research and innovation and the catching up process of the latter countries - some of which are currently on the path to EU accession. It will also stimulate scientific excellence, which will improve scientific performance and thereby the innovation capacity and competitiveness of the Region.

The adopted approach

The Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy initiative was launched in three main phases.

⁴⁷ See Innovation Union Competitiveness Report and Innovation Union Scoreboard 2011 and FP7 Country Fiches.

In a first phase, following the endorsement of the EUSDR by the European Council in June 2012, the JRC made contacts with different stakeholders of the Danube Region at scientific and political level who all confirmed the opportuneness for the JRC to launch and coordinate an initiative to support the Strategy. At scientific level, the JRC signed a Letter of Intent for cooperation on the scientific support to the Danube Strategy with four Sciences Academies of the Danube Region in November 2011. This cooperation was later extended to six other Sciences Academies of the Region and to the Danube Rectors' Conference which is a network representing 54 universities of the Region.

In a second phase, the JRC in cooperation with its scientific partners defined a set of limited priorities for the scientific support to the Danube Strategy, namely environment protection, irrigation and agricultural development, navigability and energy production (see section 4). These priorities were presented at a high-level event organised by the JRC in Brussels on 24 April 2012 where the key stakeholders from the Danube Region at the political, scientific and industry level confirmed the relevance and importance of these priorities.

In a third phase, the JRC and its scientific partners elaborated concrete proposals for flagship clusters aiming to provide policy makers with the appropriate scientific support to tackle these interlinked priorities. These proposals were presented and discussed at a scientific meeting at the JRC site in Ispra (Italy) in March 2013 which gathered more than 130 scientists from various scientific organisations from the Danube region.

On this basis, the flagship clusters were fine-tuned and presented at a high-level event on 16 May 2013 in Bratislava. The event which was opened by the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, H.E. Robert Fico and the Vice-President of the European Commission, Maroš Šefčovič gathered many high-level representatives from the national authorities, scientific community and industry of the Danube Region. All of them confirmed their strong support for the 'Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy' initiative as well as the relevance of the identified priorities and of the proposed flagship clusters.

Priorities

The Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy initiative focuses on four vertical priorities which are considered to be of vital importance for the Danube region:

- **Environmental protection:** The Danube Region and the Danube River are very rich in ecological terms. However, they are suffering from climate change which was one of the causes of the major floods that the Region recently had to face. The degradation of biodiversity and deforestation are also key issues to tackle.
- **Irrigation and agriculture development:** Tackling pressures on water caused by agriculture represents important challenges in Europe and in the Danube Region. In 2003, the reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) increased the opportunities for assisting in the implementation of water protection policies through an efficient use of Cross Compliance and of Agri-

Environmental measures in the CAP. Therefore, there is a pressing need to develop models of integrated landscape management of the river basin and sustainable land use balancing socio-economic development and protection of nature. Actions should be developed to establish a water abstraction management concept with special attention to water demand management. In the agriculture sector, more efficient and sustainable water saving irrigation techniques will have to be developed.

- **Navigability:** The Danube River is flowing across Europe, from Germany to Romania. It is a major inland waterway, but it is under-exploited. Navigation is a safe and environmental-friendly transportation mode, which should be promoted. Therefore, new and more sustainable waterway management policies should be developed.
- **Energy production:** Energy is one of the key challenges faced by the Danube Region. The Region mainly suffers from the absence of a common energy market and from insufficient domestic energy production. The Region has, however, a huge natural potential to develop renewable energies, including bioenergy in the form of biomass or biogas.

In addition to these vertical priorities, the JRC initiative also addresses one transversal priority, which consists in supporting decision-makers of the Danube Region in designing and implementing **research and innovation strategies for Smart Specialisation**.

Implementation

Flagship clusters and activities

The Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy initiative is sub-divided into different flagship clusters and activities. They aim to address the scientific challenges faced by the Danube Region from an integrated and cross-cutting perspective taking into account the interdependencies between various policy priorities.

Thematic flagship clusters

Four thematic clusters focus on the key resources of the Danube Region, namely water, land and soils, air, and bioenergy.

- **The Danube Water Nexus (DWN):** This flagship cluster covers various water-related issues such as water availability, water quality, water-related risks and the preservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity. It also aims to analyse the interdependencies of between different water-intensive economic sectors such as agriculture and energy.
- **The Danube Land and Soil Nexus (DLSN):** This flagship cluster aims to study various issues related to the state and use of land and soils in the Danube Region, including land and soil availability and quality, land and soil-related risks and the preservation and restoration of above- and belowground ecosystems and biodiversity.

- **The Danube Air Nexus (DAN):** This flagship cluster covers various issues related to air, such as air quality and the assessment of the impacts of air pollution on ecosystems, on climate change and on public health.
- **The Danube Bio-energy Nexus (DBN):** This flagship cluster addresses the challenges related to energy in the Danube Region. It focuses on the high potential of the Danube Region for developing renewable energy from materials derived from biological sources.

Horizontal activities

The four thematic clusters are complemented by three horizontal activities:

- **The Danube Reference Data and Service Infrastructure (DRDSI):** This pilot project aims to establish a Reference Data and Service Infrastructure for the Danube Region (DRDSI). The DRDSI aims to offer a satellite view on harmonised data sets on various issues related to the Danube Region (such as water and soil quality, population, landscapes...etc.). Thereby, it will provide policy-makers and other stakeholders with comparable data to support evidence-based decision-making in the Danube Region.
- **Smart Specialisation:** Due to its unique experience, the JRC – via its Smart Specialisation Platform – supports the designing and implementation of Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation in the Danube Region, taking into consideration the regional assets and opportunities but also the broader macro-regional dimension.
- **Danube Innovation Partnership (DIP)⁴⁸:** In the context of this cluster, the JRC, leveraging on the expertise of the European network of Technology Transfer Offices ('TTO Circle') coordinated by the JRC, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), and the European Investment Fund (EIF), proposes to gather stakeholders in the innovation value chain of the Danube region into a partnership that will design and implement actions to accelerate innovation and technology transfer. The DIP builds on the results of a pilot initiative launched by the Steinbeis Foundation with four partners from Danube countries.

Scientific work organisation

The aim of the clusters is to join force in the Danube Region in order to develop common end products.

The JRC coordinates the activities undertaken in the framework of the different clusters. In each cluster, work is sub-divided into different work packages. Most work packages are implemented directly by the JRC in collaboration with scientific partners from the Danube Region, while additional satellite activities and projects may be carried out by external partners.

With the exception of the horizontal activities on the creation of the DRDSI and on smart specialisation described in section 5.1.2, the other flagship clusters and

⁴⁸ It should be noted that the DIP is currently under development and, unlike the four thematic clusters and the other two horizontal activities, it was not presented at the high-level event in Bratislava of 16 May 2013.

activities are due to produce their first results within one or two years of the beginning of their implementation.

Channelling scientific results to decision-makers and other stakeholders

In order to ensure that the scientific results obtained are properly channelled to the decision-makers and stakeholders who can use them to develop policy measures and actions in the Danube Region, the JRC maintains close contacts with the Directorate-General for Regional Policy and the other relevant policy Directorate-Generals of the European Commission, as well as the relevant EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators and National Contacts Points.

Concluding Remarks

Franziska Sielker, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg

Katja Vonhoff, University of Stuttgart

In summary, the papers presented at the conference, and included in an updated version in this publication, reflect on the EUSDR and its challenges and opportunities through a number of different perspectives. The first series of presentations reflected on newly developing macro-regional strategies as a new element of the multi-level governance system of the EU (Gänzle/ Kern) and as an element with different possible influences and impacts on Europeanization (Chilla/ Sielker). Koller reflected on the EUSDR using European integration theories. Ágh reflected on the first years of the EUSDR and the general opportunities and challenges provided. VonHoff/Sielker focused on the evaluation of the added-value of macro-regional strategies.

The second part presented experiences from different countries and regions within the EU with the EUSDR from different regional experiences (Studennikov, Ukraine; Iovu, Moldavia; Kaiser; Görgy, Hungary; Valchev, Rumania). The regional perspective was complemented through an analysis from different standpoints, e.g. the experience of EU funding implementation (Roth, Valchev), the implementation of a bottom-up approach (Schneider) and institutional relations (Orgonas). The third and last part considered scientific support e.g. from the JRC (Gommenginger) in the period from 2014-2020 (Corpakis/Zonna).

The challenges and opportunities identified at the conference for the EUSDR's future are manifold and vary within the different EUSDR regions considerably. The two main challenges that can be extracted from the papers and the discussions at the conference itself, are, first, the different focuses of national and European-wide discussion, and second, the different expectations of stakeholders towards the relevant processes. Whereas the European wide discussion focused around governance, alignment of funding etc., the conference has shown the strong dependency of EUSDR dynamics on national dynamics. It is critical to understand such national dynamics further in order to fully analyse EUSDR developments.

The political complexity of the EUSDR is immense, made more so by the diversity within the different Priority Areas. Within the different priority areas, but also with regard to different country perspectives, academia could, in addition to Priority Area Coordinators, Steering Groups and National Contact Points, provide source of external review, and thus support the monitoring process of the EUSDR.

The second challenge prominent in discussion was the different expectations of different stakeholders, such as the European Commission, Nation States, and issue-bounded stakeholders. The variety of stakeholders, which on the one hand is an opportunity, also is a challenge as such stakeholders have variable and uncertain expectations of the strategy. This leads, in part, to a behavior of "waiting" and in part

to a very active engagement aiming at influencing agendas. The EUSDR certainly profits from the different stakeholders, however not all such perspectives are consistently represented. Academic support to the EUSDR could offer to channel presentations of these different positions, expectations and activities.

EUSDR dynamics are complex and powerful. This can be seen, for example, in the large number of stakeholders attending the Annual Forums or being engaged in EUSDR activities. Thus the chances for the EUSDR to meet its goals and contribute to the development of the Danube Region as a growing region are high. The newly-commenced funding period of the EU can also serve as a trigger for further strategy implementation.

The results of the conference suggest that we ought to explicitly take account of national dynamics and the political dimension underpinning the EUSDR. The EUSDR can serve as an instrument of monitoring and coordinating between different countries, in order prevent activities and policies which may be of benefit to the whole region are only being carried out in parts of it. With its intergovernmental design, the EUSDR offers the chance to present an overview of these national dynamics to the policy makers. The opportunities are many: the efficiency of the EUSDR to influence policy-making and implementation activities however depends on national commitment and, vice versa, on what this tool offers to the national interests to pursue their agendas within this framework. The EUSDR also can trigger of discussion in national contexts.

The DSRN, which held the conference in Brussels as one out of a series of small conferences, can support the EUSDR process through the presentation of different results and serve as a channel for information to the JRC or the respective politicians.

Annex 1: Biographies of Conference Speakers

Professor Dr. Attila Ágh



Prof. Dr. Attila Ágh works as a professor at the Department of Political Science at the Budapest Corvinus University since 1990. He used to be the head of the Department. He studied Philosophy and History in Nancy/France and Budapest/Hungary. He holds a PhD from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He is focusing on comparative politics and processes of Europeanization. Ágh has published several books and articles about the system changes in Middle and Eastern Europe as well as the EU enlargement process. At the moment, he is also doing research about EUSDR. He is co-editor of the publications of the Blue Ribbon Research Center.

Joachim Baldermann



Joachim Baldermann studied urban and regional planning in Germany and Great Britain. He worked for a long time as assistant professor at the Universities of Stuttgart, Karlsruhe and the Catholic University of Santiago de Chile. His research and teaching activities focused on local and regional development in particular spatial planning, later – within the context of development cooperation – on community development, putting a special focus on social movements and grassroots development. Since 2000 he holds a contract as external lecturer at the University for Public Administration Kehl (University of Applied Science) teaching European Programs, Regional Policies and European Territorial Cooperation.

Concerning his practical experience, he spent three years as GTZ expert in Cairo/Egypt, where he was responsible amongst others for the preparation of the master plan for the New Town “EL Obour”. Since 1990, he works for the State of Baden-Württemberg: He was significantly involved in the programming and implementation of the very first European cross-border pilot programme PAMINA, located in the Upper Rhine Valley. He headed the first unit for cross-border cooperation and European affairs in Baden-Württemberg’s economic administration and was seconded to Brussels for several years as an observer and representative of the Ministry of Finance and Economics. Today since 2012, he is active principally as policy adviser for the Ministry.

Professor Dr. Tobias Chilla



Tobias Chilla is Professor for Geography at the Institute of Geography at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg. His research focus lies on regional development, in particular with regard to the territorial dimension of European integration and on the field of Applied Geography. He held post-doc positions at the Universities of Luxembourg, Bamberg and Cologne. Before joining the Erlangen University, he has been responsible for the ESPON Contact point of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. His habilitation thesis (University of the Saarland) addressed the territorial

consequences of Europeanization. He studied geography at Cologne University, where he also obtained his PhD.

Dr. Dimitri Corpakis



Dr. Dimitri Corpakis, Head of Unit, Regional Dimension of Innovation (Regional Innovation Strategies and Links with Cohesion Policy) DG Research & Innovation, European Commission, in Brussels. An engineer by training, Dimitri has to date more than 30 years' experience in European affairs. Before joining the European Commission in 1990, he worked as an EU expert with the Greek Ministry of Education. His Brussels career started in 1990 (Education and Training) before moving in 1992 in the area of R&D. After an assignment with the ESPRIT

Programme (European Strategic Programme for Research in Information Technologies), he moved to the R&D Policy area, with personal contributions to several initiatives (moving towards e-Science, setting-up the European Research Advisory Board (EURAB), Regions of Knowledge). From 2006 until 2011 he was the Head of Unit on "Horizontal aspects and Coordination" at the Directorate "Science, Economy and Society" of the Directorate General for Research. Throughout his work in the Commission, Dr. Dimitri Corpakis has followed closely the key issues surrounding the deployment of the Internet and its impact on Europe and particularly European Science. Since 2011, he is Head of Unit, Regional Dimension of Innovation, and Directorate for Research and Innovation.

Minister Peter Friedrich



As the Minister for the Bundesrat, Europe and International Affairs, Peter Friedrich represents the interests of Baden-Württemberg in the Federal and European political arena. As Commissioner of Land Baden-Württemberg to the Federation, Peter Friedrich is a voting member of the Bundesrat (Federal Council) on behalf of the State. Prior to his appointment as Minister in 2011, Peter Friedrich was Member of the German Parliament since 2005, Member of the Health Committee and spokesperson for the "Youngsters" (young members of the SPD). Before, he worked as Project Manager for EU funding at translake GmbH, and as a Research Assistant

at Lernagentur Bodensee impuls GmbH, Konstanz. Peter Friedrich obtained a Master in Public Administration and Management at the University of Konstanz. He speaks German, English and French.

Professor Dr. Stefan Gänzle



Stefan Gänzle is Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science and Management, University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway. His interests lie in the field of EU foreign policy, international relations and regionalization.

Aurélie Gommenginger



Aurélie Gommenginger is a Policy Co-ordinator with the Unit dealing with Interinstitutional and Stakeholder Relations at the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. Prior to her current position, Aurélie successively served as a Team Leader, Training Coordinator and Policy Analyst with the general information service of the European Commission, Europe Direct, which also runs the Research Enquiry Service on the EU Research Framework Programmes. Previously, she also worked with the Euro Info Centres business support network

(current Enterprise Europe Network) and the Health and Consumers Directorate-General of the European Commission. Aurélie Gommenginger graduated in EU affairs from the Institute of Political Sciences of Strasbourg and completed a Master's degree in European Union law at the Sorbonne University in Paris.

Andrei Iovu



Andrei Iovu works as a consultant at HCNM OSCE where he advises the Government of the Republic of Moldova on the elaboration of an Integration Strategy. He is also researcher at the Institute for Public Policy conducting studies on security issues and sectorial reforms. He holds a Master degree in Security and Politics from the University College of London, UK. Previously, Andrei Iovu worked for GIZ as a national advisor on the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region in the Republic of Moldova. He supported the national authority (Ministry of Regional Development and Constructions) in the coordination and implementation of this strategic framework.

Professor Dr. Tamás Kaiser



Prof. Dr. Tamás Kaiser, associate professor at National University of Public Service, Head of Department of Public Policy and Development of Public Administration, took his degree in Political Science at The University of Pécs in 1999 before completing a PhD (on the Europeanization and regionalization) at the PhD school of Political Sciences of the University of Eötvös Loránd in 2004. His main research areas are: Europeanization and regionalization, multi-level governance, European regional policy, sub-national interest representation in the EU. He has several publications on the policy issues of the European Union among which there are three books (The Europeanization process and the meso-levels, Veszprém, 2001. / Bridges or Barriers? The role of the transnational cooperation's in the integration process, ÚjMandátumKiadó, Budapest 2006/ Rolling Devolution in the United Kingdom. Unanswered questions, new challenges. GondolatKiadó, Budapest, 2012)

Associate Professor Dr. Boglárka Koller



Dr. Boglárka Koller, associate professor at the Institute of International and Political Studies, European Faculty, King Sigismund College, Budapest and senior researcher at the Blue Ribbon Research Centre. She graduated at the Corvinus University, Budapest as an economist in 1998; she also holds an MA in Nationalism Studies from the Central European University, Budapest, an MSc in European Studies from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a PhD from the Corvinus University (2004). Her main research areas are the theories and history of European integration, nations and nationalism and the identity issues in Europe. She has several publications on the European Union, identity questions and the EUDRS. She is co-editor of the publications of the Blue Ribbon Research Center.

Associate Professor Dr. Györgyi Nyikos



Györgyi Nyikos is associate professor at the National University of Public Service and counselor at the Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU in Brussels. Nyikos was formerly Deputy State Secretary for Development Affairs and the Hungarian Deputy Governor of the Governing Council of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, before that the general counsel of the Office of Fiscal Council Republic of Hungary and prior to that vice-president for public administration at the National Office for Regional Development. Her research work is in Public Finance Management, Regional Policy and Public Procurement.

Dr. des. Doris Orgonas



Doris Orgonas did her PhD at the Eberhard-Karls-University Tübingen, Ludwig-Uhland-Institute of Empirical Cultural Science. Her dissertation is concerned with the institutional cultural, educational and research exchange between Baden-Württemberg and Hungary. Since 2009 she works part time in the administration of the municipal Gallery Stihl Waiblingen. In 2008, she earned a joint degree in languages, economics and area studies at the University of Passau.

Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. Klaus Roth



Professor Dr. Dr. h. c. Klaus Roth was born in Hamburg in 1939. He studied English, Geography, Slavic Studies, and Folklore/Ethnology at Hamburg, Freiburg, Aberdeen, and Bloomington universities. In 1969, he received an M.A. in Folkloristic at Indiana University, in 1975 a PhD at Freiburg University. 1976-82, he worked as assistant professor at Münster University, from 1982 to 2005 as a full professor at the Institute for European Ethnology of Munich University. Since April 2005, he is professor emeritus. In 2005, he became Doctor honoris causa of New Bulgarian

University, Sofia, and in 2012, he received the Danubius Award in Vienna. From 1996 to 2003, he was vice president of the Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, from 2003 to 2009 president of the J. G. Herder Research Council; from 2002 to 2008 director of the Bavarian Research Group Forost. He has done extensive research and published on Southeast European everyday culture in the periods of socialism and post-socialism as well as on the relationship between the Balkans and Western Europe.

Dr. Gábor Schneider



Gábor Schneider completed his PhD in applied political science at the Corvinus University Budapest in 2010. In his research he specialised into regional competitiveness, regionalisation and EU regional policy and their relation to governance issues. Beside his academic activities, he has over 10 years of experience in the central public administration where he dealt with issues such as regionalisation, spatial planning and EU regional policy. From October 2011 until September 2012 he worked as a post-doc researcher at the Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies (SIEPS), after that he attended a competence development programme at the Stockholm University. Currently, he works for SKL International in Stockholm, Sweden with issues connected to EU regional policy. In his recent research he is investigating macro-regionalization from a bottom-up perspective.

Franziska Sielker



Franziska Sielker (Dipl.-Ing.) is a scientific assistant and PhD student at the Institute of Geography at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg, where she writes her dissertation on rescaling processes in macro-regional strategies. During her PhD she was a Visiting Scholar at the University of Cambridge at the Department of Land Economy, funded by the German Academic Exchange Service. She holds a degree in Spatial planning from the Faculty of Spatial Planning at the TU Dortmund University. Before finishing her studies, she served a traineeship at the ESPON Coordination Unit in Luxemburg and obtained a DAAD scholarship to prepare her diploma thesis on the macro-regional strategy in the Danube region at the TU Vienna. Her research focuses on the field of European regional policy and governance, Europeanization and (Re-) Territorialisation, as well as macro-regional strategies and regional development. Sielker has been abroad for several reasons, studying at the Universidad de Chile in Valdivia for one semester or participating in the ASA Programme funded by the BMZ including an internship in Georgia in 2010.

Igor Studennikov



Igor Studennikov is a co-founder and Executive Director of the Centre for Regional Studies, an independent institution established in October 1998 and based in Odessa, Ukraine. In 2004-2006, he was working for the Odessa Regional Branch of the National Institute for Strategic Studies as Senior

Researcher and Head of the Department of Regional Monitoring. Since July 2011 Igor Studennikov is a member of the Executive Committee of the Danube Civil Society Forum (re-elected in September 2013). Igor Studennikov, individually and in cooperation with other academicians and researchers, is the author of more than twenty academic papers, books and analytical articles dedicated to theoretical aspects of regional studies, EU regional policy, regional policy and regional development in Ukraine, trans-frontier cooperation in Europe. Since the beginning of 2010, Igor Studennikov has been closely involved in fostering Ukraine's involvement in the Danube Strategy process contributing to the development of a "Public Vision of Ukraine's Participation in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region" and an analytical paper "The Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region: an Analysis and Perspective of its Implementation in Ukraine". Currently, Igor Studennikov is team leader for the EU-funded project "Strengthening Civil Society Involvement in Assisting the Government with the Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region". In this capacity, he is closely involved in the development of a Comprehensive Vision of the Implementation of the Danube Strategy in Ukraine.

Michael Theurer, Member of the European Parliament



Michael Theurer (FDP/ALDE), Member of the European Parliament since 2009, is Chair of the Budgetary Control Committee and Substitute Member of the Committee on Regional Development as well as Vice-President of the "MEP Danube Forum", an intergroup network of MEPs. Coming from Baden-Württemberg, one of the German Länder strongly supporting the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, Michael Theurer has long been active in promoting and further developing the Danube Strategy with a special focus on active citizenship. Most recently, he co-founded the Danube Parliamentary Network Initiative in May 2013 - the first network of parliamentarians across the Danube region that aims at closer cooperation.

Professor Rumen Valchev



Professor Rumen Valchev is Chairholder UNESCO Chair of Human Rights and Culture of Peace, Bourgas Free University, Open Education Centre. He did his PhD in Sociology, Warsaw University, 1980. He has been President Foundation on Negotiation and conflict resolution since 1992 and Director of Open Education Centre (the biggest Bulgarian NGO in the field of Civic Education) since 1992. From 1992-2002, he was Editor in Chief "Open Education Journal" and Deputy minister of Education responsible for Educational Reform 1997. Since 1998, he has been chairman of the board - Regional Youth Centre for Teaching Tolerance. Professor Rumen Valchev is an expert of Council of Europe on Education for Democratic Citizenship. He is coordinator of two GRUNDTVIG Projects "Establishment of Parent's Consulting centres in Italy, Romania and Bulgaria for work with Roma population 2003-2005; He did

Trainings for teachers for educators in non –formal education between 2007-2009 and an Europeaid Project “Development and Global Education Project” 2010-2013. He published about Bulgarian Educational Reform, A decade of non-expected changes (2002), Educational reform and Civic Education (2003), Interactive methods in Civic Education (2004) Assessment in the field of Civic Education (2004) and about Global and Development Education (2013).

Katja S. Vonhoff



Katja S. Vonhoff (born Seifarth) is a PhD student at the University of Stuttgart, Department of International Relation and European Integration. In her research, she focuses on transnational networks in the Danube region and their role in the implementation process of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. She is also an independent consultant. Before, she worked at the Robert Bosch Foundation in Stuttgart and Hertie Foundation in Frankfurt am Main in the field of international relations. She studied Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology, English Studies and Business Administration at the J.W. Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. Katja Vonhoff worked, studied or did research in Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, UK and USA.

Annex 2: Conference Programme and List of Participants

Conference on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region: Challenges and Chances 2014 – 2020 04 – 06 November 2013

Monday, 04 November 2013

Welcome and introduction

*Peter Friedrich (Minister for the Bundesrat, Europe and International Affairs
State of Baden-Württemberg)*

*Katja Vonhoff (Coordinator of the “Danube Strategy Research Network” Department
of International Relations and European Integration; University of Stuttgart (PhD
student))*

Macro-regions and multi-level governance: theorising a new governance structure

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region: challenges and chances 2014 – 2020

*Prof. Dr. Attila Agh (Department for Political Sciences: Corvinus University of
Budapest)*

Moderation: *Katja Vonhoff*

‘Macroregionalisation’ – a new form of European governance: the EU Strategies for
the Danube Region and the Baltic Sea

*Prof. Dr. Stefan Gänzle Department of Political Science and Management University
of Agder*

Territorial cooperation by macro-regions – a new form of Europeanisation?

*Prof. Dr. Tobias Chilla & Franziska Sielker (PhD student)
Institute for Geography
Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg*

Macro-regions and multi-level governance: building up a new governance structure

Moderation: *Prof. Dr. Tobias Chilla*

The involvement of the European Parliament and national parliaments
*Michael Theurer, Member of the European Parliament and Vice-President of the
MEP Danube Forum*

European Commission: EUSDR development, evaluation, future perspectives
Ann-Jasmin Krabatsch

Programme Manager at the Unit Competence Centre Macro-regions and European Territorial Cooperation at European Commission Directorate-General Regional and Urban Policy

An academic assessment of the evaluation of macro-regional strategies

Katja Vonhoff and Franziska Sielker

Tuesday, 05 November 2013

Welcome and introduction

Johannes Jung (Head of the Representation, Representation of the State Baden-Württemberg to the EU)

The funding policy of the European Union

Moderation: *Katja Vonhoff*

The implementation of EU funds in South East Europe

Prof. Dr. Klaus Roth (Faculty for Cultural Sciences, Ludwig-Maximilian-University Munich)

Panel discussion: funding challenges

Panel participants: *Prof. Dr. Klaus Roth, Prof. Dr. Rumen Valchev (Bourgas Free University), Joachim Baldermann (regional policy advisor and EU funding expert), Mihaela Bucsa (EU funding expert from Romania)*

Emphasising the nation state: NON-EU and EU countries

Moderation: *Franziska Sielker*

EUSDR – perspectives of NON-EU countries

The Republic of Moldova: What are the challenges and chances?

Andrei Iovu (OSCE Mission to Moldova, Former National Advisor, Implementation of EUSDR in the Republic of Moldova, Ministry of Regional Development and Construction)

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region: Does Ukraine have a chance?

Igor Studennikov (Centre for Regional Studies, Ukraine)

The challenges of EU enlargement in Southeast Europe

Dr. phil. Dušan Reljić (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Head of Brussels Office)

EU relationships to neighbouring countries

Konstantinos Vardakis (Deputy Head of the Division for the Eastern Partnership, Regional Cooperation and OSCE, European Union External Action Service)

Panel discussion: EUSDR as a framework for partnership

Panel participants: *Andrei Iovu, Igor Studennikov, Konstantinos Vardakis, Dr. Dušan Reljić*

EUSDR – perspectives of NEW EU member states

The added value of the integrated approach: the case of Hungary

Prof. Dr. Tamas Kaiser (University of Pannonia)

Danube identity in reflection to the emerging new narrative in the EU

*Associate Prof. Dr. Boglarka Koller (Institute of International and Political Studies
King Sigismund College)*

The EUSDR as new tool

*Associate Prof. Dr. Györgyi Nyikos (National University of Public Service
Counselor, Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU)*

Panel discussion: new EU member states – new mediators?

Panel participants: *Prof. Dr. Tamas Kaiser, Associate Prof. Dr. Boglarka Koller,
Associate Prof. Dr. Györgyi Nyikos*

EUSDR – perspectives of OLD EU member states

The State of Baden-Württemberg and the EUSDR

Matthias Holzner (Ministry of State Baden-Württemberg)

Old bridges, new paths and current dynamics. Baden-Württemberg's cultural, scientific and educational relations to Hungary and the Danube Region.

Doris Orgonas (PhD student, Cultural Sciences, University of Tuebingen)

Austria's involvement in the EUSDR

Anna Maria Schober (The Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning)

Expanding the governance structure

Moderation: Dr. Gábor Schneider

EUSDR – perspectives of cities and regions

Panel discussion: role of cities and regions:

*Prof. Dr. Stefan Gänzle (University of Agder), Peter Langer (City of Ulm and Council of
Danube Cities and Regions), Prof. Dr. Rumen Valchev (Bourgas Free University)*

Wednesday, 06 November 2013

EUSDR – involvement of civil society

Moderation: *Prof. Dr. Klaus Roth*

A critical assessment of the civil society's involvement in the development and implementation process of the EUSDR. Practical experiences from the Middle and Lower Danube.

Dr. Gábor Schneider (Swedish SKL International)

The different meanings of the term civil society and two cases of civil society engagement within the framework of the EUSDR: EUSDR civil society network of NGOs from Baden-Württemberg and the transnational platform for NGOs "Donauwandel"

Stefan Barth (Agapedia – Jürgen Klinsmann Foundation, M.A. student, Centre for Social Investment, University of Heidelberg)

The involvement of the civil society in the multi-level-governance structure of the EUSDR

Daniela Urschitz (Priority Area 10 "To step up institutional capacity and cooperation" City of Vienna)

Panel discussion: involvement of civil society

Panel participants: *Dr. Gábor Schneider, Stefan Barth, Daniela Urschitz*

Research in the Danube area

Moderation: *Katja Vonhoff*

New collaboration perspectives in the Danube macro-region: synergies between Horizon 2020 and Cohesion policy. Towards a new territorial cooperation focused on the knowledge economy.

Dimitri Corpakis

Head of Unit Regional Dimension of Innovation

European Commission Directorate-General Research and Innovation

Research and academic exchange in the Danube area: projects within the framework of the EUSDR

Martin Reichel (Managing director of Bavarian Research Alliance, Munich)

The European Commission's In-house science service:

Joint Research Centre

Aurélie Gommenginger

Policy Co-ordinator at the Joint Research Centre, Brussels

The socio-economic assessment of the Danube area requested by the European Commission and the State of Baden-Württemberg

Dr. Markus Kappler (Senior Researcher and Deputy Head Research Group Growth and Business Cycles at the Centre for European Economic Research, Mannheim)

Panel discussion and discussion with participants:

Panel participants: *Dimitri Corpakis, Martin Reichel, Dr. Markus Kappler, Aurélie Gommenginger*

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Conference Proceedings



A platform for transnational and interdisciplinary
research exchange on EU macro-regional strategies