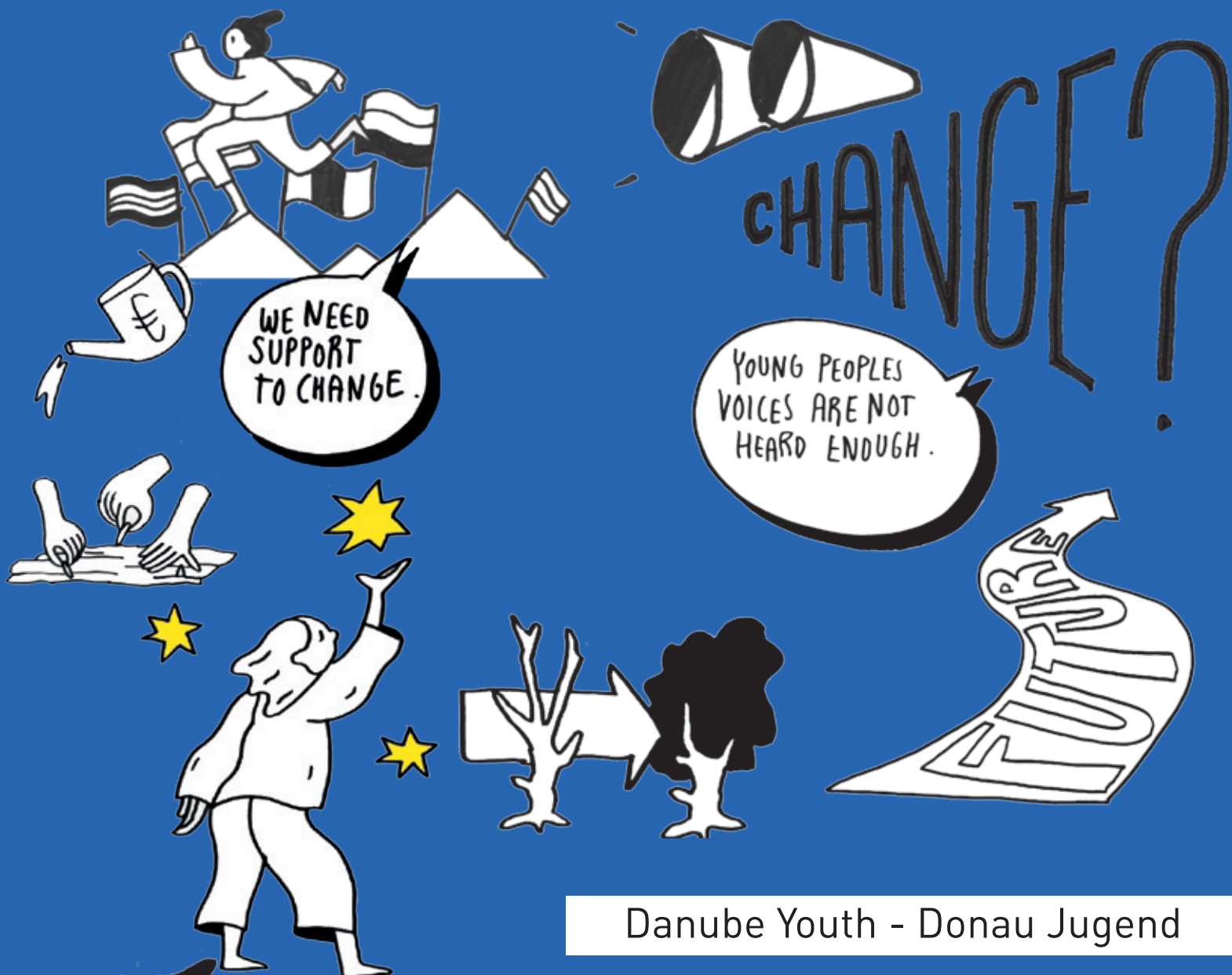


danube connects



Danube Youth - Donau Jugend

Shaping the future of Europe together



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Dear readers,

Good education and equal opportunities are what young people in the Danube Region wish for their home countries and in the EU.

But not only in the EU countries, also in the non-EU countries the youth should be equally promoted and get better chances on the labor market in the future.



Many young people felt disadvantaged during the pandemic and not heard by politicians. This is to change now. To this end, there was an EU survey on youth participation, the so-called "Conference on the Future of Europe". Proposals can be submitted on an online platform. 2022 has been proclaimed the "Year of Youth" in the EU. This shows that this topic is being taken seriously.

The state of Baden-Württemberg conducted its own survey among young people in the Danube countries. The results are subsequently shared with political decision-makers. By seeing what is important to young people, political leaders can make their decisions more in line with young people's interests. The proportion of young people in the Danube countries is high, and their wishes for the future are important for a good multicultural coexistence in democracy.

The future belongs to the youth, and they must be given a voice.

*Sabine Geller,
editor-in-chief & founder,
danube connects*

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We offer information and images from the international press on politics, tourism and culture in the Danube region. Furthermore, we keep you on track about the Danube Strategy and the various events alongside the Danube. Come and take a look!



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Lots of ideas from the Danube: Young people turn out to be power plants for the future

What is on the minds of young people from the 14 countries along the Danube? What does Europe mean to them? How do they deal with climate change? Do they want to stay at home or go abroad? What are their concerns and visions?

These are all questions that students from Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Moldova, Hungary, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Germany discussed at the "Youth Danube Salon".

This three-day conference was organised in September by the Baden-Württemberg State Ministry together with the Ulm Danube Office, the Service Office for the Danube Region Strategy, the Baden-Württemberg Centre for Europe, Agapedia, Ileu, Danet and Danube Youth. It was a virtual meeting. So anyone could simply join in from their home country and have their say.



“I want to be surrounded by smart and determined people who think of good things for the world.”

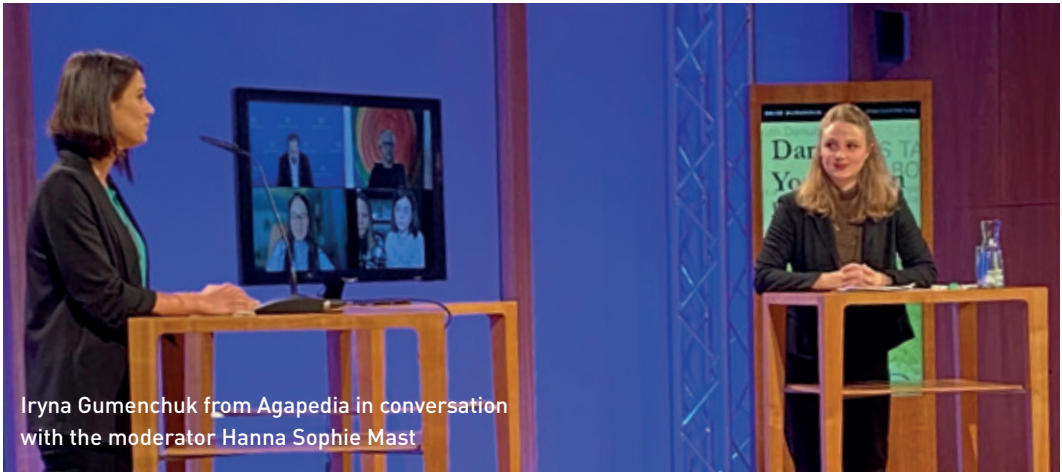
At one of the three discussion evenings, which took place under the motto "Should I stay or should I go", 62.5 percent of the 66 young people stated in a digital questionnaire that they wanted to leave home one day. It became clear that many of them associate leaving with growth, opportunities and success. For them, Europe means peace,

prosperity, future and a better quality of life. In groups, the young people eagerly discussed the things that bother them in their country. "Women are treated as if it were still the last century," criticised a young woman from Ukraine, for example. Many warned that they did not feel taken seriously by politics in their country.

Unemployment as a problem

In Bosnia, some young people are worried because politicians spend too much money on "unimportant things", as they said. "Instead of for the future of us young people." And yet, unemployment is so high, they said. But education in the Balkan countries - young people from there agreed - was "not very good to be successful abroad later on".

A young man from Montenegro made it clear that he thought his country was beautiful. "But everything is full of tourism. And many jobs only work with tourism. That's why in winter some are unemployed. And everything is closed then." In winter, he said, there is not much left of summer life. That fru-



Iryna Gumenchuk from Agapedia in conversation with the moderator Hanna Sophie Mast

generation leave. This creates a shortage. "Everyone flees to look for better opportunities for their lives in other countries." But according to her, it is not good if everyone leaves.

But what would the young people like to change? Many would like to see less corrupt politicians. One young woman from Croatia had an innovative suggestion: "There should be a standard for what every politician must have done in his or her life or what they are able to do in order to be allowed to become a politician at all." Another wish was: "That educated people are respected more." Another young woman said, "I want to be surrounded by smart and determined people who think of good things for the world."



At the same time, you could feel that many of the young people loved their country even so. They were enthusiastic about the nature there, about their wonderful childhood, about the people who are important to them there. About the mentality that connects them and keeps them there. All the young people who took part in the discussion seemed very

passionate and ambitious in their concerns for their country and Europe.

On the conference day organized by the associations Danube Networkers and the "Institut für virtuelles und reales Lernen in der Erwachsenenbildung" (Institute for Virtual and Real Learning in Adult Education) an intergenerational exchange took place. For three hours, almost 150 young and older people between the ages of 16 and 86 from all the Danube countries reflected on "digitalisation", "environment", "culture", "demographic change" and "migration". The young people called for more exchange between the generations from Eastern and Western Europe. For example, in the form of programmes including meetings. These could be partly online, but not commercial. In this way, young people could better share their interests and advocate for their concerns.

Another day was dedicated to the experiences of young people from non-EU countries: Ukraine, Moldavia and Serbia. What other cultural backgrounds and opportunities do they have? For example, when it comes to mobility, jobs and education.

The Youth Danube Salon concluded in mid-October in Berlin, where the Baden-Württemberg state government and its representation in Berlin had invited the participants. Some of them were "live on site" - others took part virtually. During the evening, they presented their ideas and wishes for their Europe of the future. For example, State Secretary Florian Hassler, who is responsible for European affairs in the state, Normunds Popens from the EU Commission and ambassadors from the Danube countries. These included exchange programmes that integrate young people from non-EU countries. They should also be able to get visas more easily.

The EU should encourage non-EU countries to do more to protect the climate, they wished. Basically, the young people from the Danube region would be happy about more opportunities to participate in political decision-making processes and about additional programmes for "migration as a temporary experience", for those from non-EU countries as well. They could then use these experiences and the knowledge acquired in their home countries.

Young people also long for a European standard of education. In some countries of the Danube region, there is still a need for improvement in terms of human rights, equality and sexual self-determination. The migration of skilled workers from Eastern to Western Europe is causing instability and an ageing society. Among other things, there is a shortage of nursing and care staff for the elderly.



Furthermore, there are great differences in access to culture between Western and Eastern Europe, between urban and rural areas and depending on social affiliation. Here, too, exchange programmes could help. The voting age should be lowered, participants said, because young people have many ideas for a successful and fair future in Europe. But often they are not heard.

Conference on the future of Europe

That should change. The young people from the Danube were not only heard at the Youth Danube Salon. At the end of the conference, they formulated a series of these demands to EU politicians and submitted them as a contribution to the "Conference on the Future of Europe". This is a participatory platform of the EU Parliament and the EU Commission that offers European citizens the opportunity to discuss their proposals for their Europe of the future. The young people's proposals are also to be included in the European Commission's final report. Especially the young people of the Danube countries, who are disappointed by the politics in their country, can now hope that the EU will stand up for them. So that they can enjoy living in their countries and make a difference for the future.

Isabella Hafner,
journalist, Ulm

INFO

The EU Commission has now proclaimed 2022 "Year of Youth. Young people throughout Europe are called upon to express their interests, wishes and ideas the European Commission in a survey.

DANUBE YOUTH NETWORK

Do the EU and the rest of Europe still have a future? This question is justified, as one reads again and again how forces are being activated to break them up and that national values are making a strong comeback. But there is one piece of good news. The future is promising: thanks to the young people whose voices are now being heard in the influential circles of Brussels.

This is, among others, thanks to Stefan Barth and Iryna Gumenchuk of the international children's charity Agapedia. In the coalition agreement of 2016, the state of Baden-Württemberg had pledged to examine what role the state should play in the realization of a Danube Youth Network.

After more than two years of work with the Ministry of State's funding project "Danube Youth Participation", the NGO presented a concrete proposal for a sustainable implementation of the Danube Youth Network with its partners: the Liebenau Foundation as project executing agency, together with six "Danube Core Networkers" and other long-time NGO partners in the Danube region.

Agapedia means "love for children" and is the charity organization of former soccer player and coach Jürgen Klinsmann. It was founded in 1995 and is based in Stuttgart, Germany. With its four subsidiary foundations in Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Georgia, it supports children and young people in difficult life situations.

The Danube region is the ideal symbol for Europe. As the second longest river, the Danube flows from the Black Forest to the Black Sea through ten European countries. With the riparian states, there are a total of 14 countries in the region. 115 million people live here, 26 million of whom are 18 to 35 years old. Iryna is responsible for social media and

BACK TO THE FUTURE



Networking meeting at one of the sources of the Danube in the Black Forest

networking in the Agapedia network. Since 2015, she has been participating in and organizing transnational youth meetings as part of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). And successfully so.

Today, the Danube Youth Network includes partner NGOs in Croatia (BREZA NGO), Serbia (supernatural), Bulgaria (Re-Act) and Romania, with the Association of Transylvanian Social NGOs.

In Baden-Württemberg, the youth of Europe are taken seriously. On October 15, 2021, the first Youth.Danube Salon took place at the Baden-Württemberg State Representation in Berlin. Florian Hassler, State Secretary and representative of the state of Baden-Württemberg to the European Union, who is responsible for policy coordination, European policy and cross-border cooperation, explained how important this gathering

of young people from 14 different European countries is: "We need more youth encounters. The first Youth.Danube Salon is a project to experiment, to learn from and to develop it further." He recounts how he himself participated in the Erasmus program in France as a student. Today, he would like to see more exchanges with Southeastern Europe to learn about the lesser known parts of Europe.

Stefan Barth also recognized this years ago and invited Aida Beca and her students from the Bosnian-Herzegovinian capital Sarajevo to a summer camp in Plovdiv, Bulgaria: "One day our country will also become a member of the European Union. At the camp, we had the opportunity to show outside our borders that we have great young people in the country who want to change the situation. Our youth are not limited, as is often claimed, to ethnic-national interests or religion, but bring with them



Aida Beca with her students

an open and broad awareness," the high school teacher explains hopefully.

Because of the pandemic, many projects could only take place online. But even there, a lot has been achieved. This was noticeable at the first Youth.Danube Salon. 260 participants from 14 different countries joined forces to create



a common future for Europe. The end result showed: We adults can learn a lot from young people! Lyben Georgiev of the Bulgarian NGO Re-Act has a knack for integrating young people into society with simple and creative ideas: "I love to connect young people, to give them back their value so they can realize their purpose and true potential." So he launched Shoot by Youth. The

video project, funded by the Baden-Württemberg Foundation, challenged young people of Europe between the ages of 15 and 25 to form teams of three to five members from different Danube countries and create short videos about a local problem in their city or region. Four winners were awarded prizes at the first Youth.Danube Salon in Berlin. The topics were diverse: from lack of sex education in schools to environmental protection, a voice for youth to rediscovering critical thinking. No matter where the young people come from - if they are brought together, fears of contact quickly disappear. The unknown becomes the known, because they all share the same desires and fears.

Young people would also become more involved in the EU if they were listened to and taken seriously. Because it is like the Danube - only cooperation between the countries along it and balance of opposites can keep the river healthy. Flowing water knows no borders. If it is protected only in one country, it will not be of much use. All countries must unite and be there together for the river. It is the same in society. The adults (mostly) bring experience with them.



“One day our country will also become a member of the European Union. At the camp, we had the opportunity to show outside our borders that we have great young people in the country who want to change the situation. Our youth are not limited, as is often claimed, to ethnic-national interests or religion, but bring with them an open and broad awareness,”

Aida Beca, Bosnien-Herzegowina

However, this will not bring them any further without the young people's visions of the future, which can be realized with the knowledge of the adults. Stefan Barth is confident and hopes that his many years of work have finally produced first results: "The project volume of the Danube Youth Participation project comprises a total of 350,000 euros for a good two years and is thus relatively cost-effective. And perhaps in times of tax shortfalls, constructive cooperation will succeed in planting a sustainable Danube Youth Network after all." On the Shoot by Youth website, the following advice is given to the young video creators: "Remember - creative doesn't mean complicated!" May this wisdom also reach the hallowed halls of the EU!

Mirella Sidro
journalist, Sarajevo

"The garden of democracy must be tended constantly".

Together with partners, Budapest's city government organised the first international "Budapest Forum" in September. The forum focused on the role of cities and local initiatives in building sustainable democracies with a good quality of life.



In addition to a meeting of the "Pact of Free Cities" network - whose declaration was signed by the initiating (Lord) Mayors of Prague, Bratislava, Warsaw and Budapest as well as those of Ulm, Neu-Ulm, Berlin, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Mannheim and other European cities - politicians, journalists, activists and researchers from all over the world came together to discuss democracy.

The international participants made the event particularly special: among them were Věra Jourová (Vice-President of the EU Commission), Jean Asselborn (Foreign Minister of Luxembourg) and the renowned historians Anne Applebaum, Timothy Snyder and Timothy Garton Ash.

In his opening speech, Budapest's Lord Mayor Gergely Karácsony said that communities can only function if you adopt rules that apply to everyone and create opportunities for participation and thus equal opportunities. "Democracy must not be concentrated in the hands of a few. Institutions must be modernised to facilitate citizens' access to democracy," he said. One example of this, he said, is the Free Cities Pact.

EU must give more support to cities

During the panel discussion "Towards Polycentric Governance", Budapest's deputy mayor Gábor Kerpel-Fronius explained that Hungary's government was distancing people from democracy and that positive counter-examples had to be shown. That is why Budapest is experimenting with instruments known from other cities, for example, the participation of citizens in parts of the city budget. This is the way to get citizens to cooperate at the local level,

even in a strongly divided society. Mannheim's Lord Mayor Peter Kurz - who had received the "World Mayor International Award" for actively building networks only three days before the Forum - added that the Pact of Free Cities had also been founded as a reaction to power being concentrated in national governments and taken away from municipalities. "This is despite the fact that cities and municipalities also play an important role in the EU. Since the Union depends on them, it must strengthen them," he stressed. The political scientist Larry Diamond summed up that democracy does not automatically survive, people have to be included again and again: "The garden of democracy has to be constantly tended and renewed".

In the panel "A new vision for Europe: where should the EU be heading?", political scientist Ivan Vejvoda of the Vienna Institute for Human Sciences said: "With the rise of populism comes the disenchantment of people. They need to have a sense of security, otherwise they turn to illusions and illusionists." Social equality, he said, was fundamental to the European project, also to be able to stand against right-wing populists. MEP Claudia Gamon of the Aus-

trian NEOS party admitted that EU policy is often far away from the European citizen. During the pandemic, however, she said, it had become clear that things worked better when they were decided at European level. Her colleague Katalin Cseh from the Hungarian party Momentum stressed that Europe's perspective on its cities needs to change. Brussels should fund and support them directly, and city diplomacy should be upgraded, as cities play a major role simply because of the number of inhabitants.

Daniel Hirsch, journalist, Budapest



Karácsony with the first prize winner of the "Budapest Award for Sustainable Democracies", Aleksandra Dulkiewicz, Mayor of Gdansk.

Budapest's Lord Mayor with the First Mayor of the City of Ulm, Martin Bendel (l.), and Neu-Ulm's Cultural Office Director Ralph Seiffert (r.) from the "Pact of Free Cities."



Presentation of the György Konrád Prize

Within the framework of the first Budapest Forum, the György Konrád Prize was also awarded for the first time. The award, established by the European Danube Academy (EDA) in Ulm, honors personalities from politics, culture and civil society who are committed to democracy, civil society or equal rights in the Danube region. The prize, which comes with 5,000 euros, was awarded to the editorial team of the independent Hungarian news portal Telex.hu. The portal was founded only a year ago after Orbán confidants reshaped Index.hu, which is now a pro-government portal, by the employees who quit there, but it is already one of the most visited websites in the country.

With the György Konrád Prize, named after the Hungarian-Jewish friend of the city of Ulm, its former mayor Ivo Gönner and EDA director Peter Langer, as well as the companion of Ulm's Danube activities, Ulm continues its commitment to the Danube region within the framework of the European Danube Strategy. The most prominent example of this commitment is probably the International Danube Festival, which takes place every two years on both sides of the Danube. But that's not all: Ulm has an even older tradition with democracy in the form of the "Schwörmontag" ("Oath Monday"). Since the 14th century, the "Schwörbrief" (pledging letter) has guaranteed the citizens a greater say. Every year in July, the city leaders of Ulm give an account of their actions, and the citizens and city council pledge mutual loyalty. So, it was only natural that Ulm and Neu-Ulm should also join the "Pact of the Free Cities" mentioned at the beginning. At a press conference in the Danube Office it was announced that the pact focused on the promotion of democracy, liberal rights and basic values. These values are under pressure in the whole world and have to be renewed and fought for again and again; it was said that Ulm wants to send a message with its participation in the pact.





Integration, International Understanding and Sustainability

Bringing Young People together
in the Eastern Danube Region

With the intention to shape and invest in the future, the Foundation Baden-Württemberg Stiftung is committed to secure and strengthen the sustainability of the state. With intercultural programs, the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung promotes the exchange of knowledge and development of civil society, including the fostering of peaceful international relations.

The program "Perspective Danube: Education, Culture and Civil Society" addresses current socially relevant challenges, it shows how one can participate directly and supports communication between different population groups, cultures, and religions. If we want to build bridges of tolerance and transcend mental and physical borders in people's minds and actions, then the best place to start with is the next generation. That's why the program has funded more than 40 projects for and with children and young people since 2012.

Although the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic obstructed international networking within the framework of such projects, three projects were realized in the eastern Danube region in 2021. They encouraged young people to deal with topics such as discrimination against Sinti and Roma, international and environmental protection in the Danube Delta.



Sastipe - Hello!

During the project "Sastipe" (which means "Hello!" in Romanes), organized by DENK GLOBAL! (Germany), the youth NGO ARCA (Ukraine), and Ďakujem Palikerav (Slovakia), young people from Germany, Ukraine and Slovakia enabled for three days a virtual get-together of youth. They exchanged ideas about the history, culture and empowerment of Sinti and Roma in the Danube region.

On the first day of the event, the young people learned a lot about the history of the Sinti and Roma. During a virtual museum tour, the participants acquired information about the history of persecution of these population groups. For example, the stories of Roma heroes and heroines were compiled and presented (including the story of German Sinto boxer Johann Wilhelm "Rukeli" Trollmann). The second day was dedicated to empowerment - both online and offline. Here, the event mainly fo-

cused on how to recognize discriminatory structures in everyday life and in virtual space, how to break them and, if possible, how to free oneself from them. The last day of the exchange gave (academic) education programs for Sinti and Roma as well as opportunities to study the Romani language (e.g. the Roma Graduate Preparation Program of the Central European University or the study program "Romani Studies" at Charles University Prague).

Summer camp meets creativity

The "International Summer Camp for Creativity and Integration", which took place in a small town near Bucharest, united children and young people between the ages of 12 and 17 from Romania, Ukraine and Moldova, including Sinti and Roma from Buduhala and from Potlogi, Romania. The summer camp was organized by the Cuza Society Heidelberg (Germany) in cooperation with the DAR Development Association Romania. During a series of activities, participants had the opportunity to get to know each other and make friends, and to learn a lot about the history and traditions of the host country as well as the countries of origin. In four workshops, guided by master craftsmen, they learned traditional crafts such as basketry, pottery, needlework and glass painting. Together they also visited historical and tourist sites (Bucharest, Peles Castle in Sinaia).

The participants were very enthusiastic about the project, so that the project goals were more than met. The Sinti and Roma children were integrated into the community quite naturally. They felt very comfortable, which is evident from the letters they have sent afterwards.

Keep Danube diversity alive

In the environmental protection project "Keep Danube diversity alive!" young people from Ukraine and Moldova aged 13 to 17 came together in Ismajil (Ukraine) from 23 to 27 August 2021. The camp was organized by Child-Fund Deutschland e. V. (Germany), the "Agency for Development and Investment in the Southern Region" (Ukraine) and the Association of Mothers with several Children and Women Entrepreneurs of Gagauzia "Vesta" (Moldova). It focused on topics such as biodiversity, environmental protection and cultural diversity. The young people participated in a solution-oriented simulation game on environmental challenges in the Ukrainian and Moldovan Danube region. They discussed how they can motivate others to behave in an environmentally friendly way and how they can contribute as active young people to the solution of local problems such as water pollution and threats to biodiversity. During this exchange, questions arose that can be addressed when the young people implement their own small projects as part of the overall project.

The camp ended with the simulation game "Lake of Utopia" for intercultural understanding and strengthening non-violent communication. In groups, the young diversity ambassadors founded their own island states and made clear which values and laws would apply to them and how they would live together peacefully with the states of the other groups. The ensuing discussion showed that democratic values and gender equality are important to the young people from both countries.



International summer camps in Romania



Planning game "Lake of Utopia "

The experiences from all three projects show that promoting intercultural understanding is more important than ever. In addition to the many positive project results, it became clear that the pandemic has exacerbated the problems of people who already live in difficult circumstances because of their ethnicity and the discrimination associated with it.

Special publication by



In Hungary, Roma have been actively campaigning for a more open society for some time: The Uccu Roma Informal Foundation for Education, founded in 2010, creates opportunities for Roma and non-Roma youth to meet in order to break down the misconceptions and prejudices against Roma. Therefore, the foundation mainly organizes interactive activities for 10 to 19-year-olds, but also thematic walks for all people interested in the topics of Roma identity and culture.



In conversation with Szilvia Szénási, UCCU



Roma-flag



Budapest, VIII. District: Walk to Lakatos Menyhért Roma School

artists. Uccu also passes by the Lakatos Menyhért School, named after the Hungarian Roma writer of the same name; 90% of the school's students are Roma. With this itinerary, the walk draws attention to their critical educational situation in Hungary.



FIGHTING PREJUDICE

with encounters, workshops and walks

Through the workshops, the young participants are supposed to gather as much information and personal experience as possible in order to make them more open to each other and to the outside world. The workshop on Roma identity, for example, is playful and interactive and gives students the opportunity to discuss their personal experiences and thoughts with the facilitators. For example, they have to guess who is Roma and who is not by looking at photos of people with hidden faces - surprising insights included, as clothing and jewelry, for example, are often deceiving. Another activity, "Roma Identity in Pictures," introduces the participants to the everyday life of

Roma families with the help of an exhibition. The pictures then remain in the respective school in order to reach as many students as possible. Within the framework of the "Dilemma Café", issues important to Roma society are discussed in small groups and moderated by Uccu volunteers. The module offers participants the opportunity to formulate their thoughts, get to know each other's opinions and debate. And during the workshop "Showmanship", with the help of Uccu volunteers, participants learn about Roma culture through several stations. The workshop can last for several (school) hours and offers the possibility to involve larger groups of students.

Walks also target an international audience

In addition, there are two thematic walks through Budapest for social dialogue: "Come with us to the Eighth!" in the colorful VIIIth district and "On the tracks of Roma Culture" in the IXth District. These city walks, which are also offered with English-language guidance, aim to break down prejudices by showing, among other things, how Roma culture influenced the Hungarian art world (e.g., the world-famous composer Ferenc Liszt was a fan of Roma music). The second walk introduces the cultural achievements of the Hungarian Roma and some of their most important

In addition to classes, the school offers community afternoon programs and exhibitions to the students, as well as to all residents of the district in the neighboring Glove Factory Community House. Szilvia Szénási, director of the Uccu Foundation, tells danube connects that more and more international organizations inquire about the walks, which have been offered for years. Encouraged by the high demand, the social enterprise which is behind the walks today, was founded in 2018, in order to not only to live on government funding, but to be independent. "Abroad, the walks are better known than here in Hungary, we definitely receive more international requests," Szénási said. A new walk in the VIIIth district is planned, but difficult to organize because many of the scheduled places had to close because of the pandemic or for political reasons;

according to Szénási, many Roma organizations have been made financially impossible, so they focus on foreign sources of support and fundraising. "Uccu means community to me, because the initiative teaches vital core values. By creating opportunities for Roma and non-Roma youth to meet, we started a social dialogue in which the personal narratives of Roma youth appear, thus reducing discriminatory, prejudiced thinking," she summarizes. Last but not least, the participating young Roma also receive an opportunity to live or formulate their own identity and to think individually and collectively.

Daniel Hirsch, journalist, Budapest

” UCCU means community to me, because the initiative teaches vital core values. By creating opportunities for Roma and non-Roma youth to meet, we started a social dialogue in which the personal narratives of Roma youth appear, thus reducing discriminatory, prejudiced thinking,” she summarizes. Last but not least, the participating young Roma also receive an opportunity to live or formulate their own identity and to think individually and collectively.”



Even more stories of successful and particularly committed women in the Danube region can be found in the book **DANUBE WOMEN STORIES**, published by danube books. In the summer of 2022, an exhibition is planned in Novi Sad during the European Capital of Culture Year.

www.women.danube-stories.eu

ALMOST FORGOTTEN – an unusual literary journey through the Danube region

A new video podcast series follows the traces
of "small" minorities along the Danube



Many languages - but for how long?

Worldwide, there are about 6700 languages and each of them holds a secret: While we can immediately locate English, Chinese, Hindi and Spanish - the most widespread languages in the world - geographically, most of us already fail to do so with the languages of the Lipovans, the Csángós or the Šokci. And where might the Aromanians or the Spišs live and what might they speak? The preservation of languages, many of which are threatened today, is crucial not only for the preservation of linguistic but also of cultural diversity. The diversity of the Danube region, which is so often invoked, is also found in its various languages. This variety, in turn, is a key component in building and sustaining inclusive, open, diverse, and participatory knowledge societies.

Through languages, information and knowledge are communicated, promoting prosperity, social change and sustainable development. Today, over 50 percent of the world's approximately 6700 spoken languages are at risk of disappearing. On average, a language is lost every two weeks, and with it a piece of cultural and intellectual heritage. Many languages are not even present on the Internet. In Europe, over 200 languages – the exact number depends on the census – are spoken, but the EU has only 24 official languages. UNESCO encourages its Member States to develop policies strengthening linguistic diversity and multilingualism online, as they have a key role to



Folk festival at the Bunjewatzen

play in promoting pluralistic, equitable and open knowledge societies.

Giving "small" languages a voice

The project "Almost Forgotten" is dedicated to a selection of this little-noticed topic and approaches the unknown and unfortunately almost forgotten languages of the Danube region from a literary perspective. This project aims to raise awareness of the smallest communities of the Danube region and to give them a voice and a stage with the help of literature. After researching 11 languages that are almost forgotten or little known in Western Europe, a digital series will be created. In this series, authors and their works will be presented (in the original language and in German as well as with English subtitles) and, of course, information about these languages and ethnic groups

will be conveyed. The project will also be presented at the Danube Lounge at the international book fair "Buch Wien 2021" in Vienna.

Expertise on language, culture, history and religion

In 2021, four episodes of the video podcast series will be presented: the Lipovans, the Csángós, the Šokci and Bunjevci, and the Banat Swabians. For the videos, proven and renowned experts and connoisseurs of these ethnic groups, languages and cultures agreed to participate, such as Dénes Sokcsevit from the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, himself a Šokci, who researches the history and culture of the Croats in Hungary. Camillo Breiling completed his doctorate at the University of Vienna this year on the history, culture and religion of the

Lipovans. Krisztián Tampu, a historian and editor, is himself a native of Csángó Land in Romania's Băcău County and now lives and works in Budapest.



In changoland



Contemporary authors are portrayed

The fact that there are but few contemporary authors writing in the respective languages and language variants is another sad proof that these cultures are threatened with extinction. All the greater is the joy that the project "Almost Forgotten" can present some representatives of the "small" literatures along the Danube. The writer Felicia Gábor has also left her birthplace Lujzikalagor in Csángó Land and lives in Budapest today, but in her texts, she describes the original life of this minority - partly in the original language. She also gives many lectures and participates in panel discussions in order to make the culture of the Csángós better known. The author Tomislav Žigmanov lives in Subotica (Serbia) but is a member of the

ethnic group of the Bunjevci, who - like the Šokci - are native to Serbia, Croatia and Hungary. He directs the House of Culture of Croats in Vojvodina (Zavod za kulturu vojvodjanskih Hrvata). His play "Bunjevački Blues" is currently being performed at the Croatian Theater in Pécs (Hungary). Nikolaus Tullius comes from the Banat village of Șandra (Alexanderhausen, Sándorháza), but has lived in Canada for more than half a century. His latest book "Gschichte vun drhem" collects short stories of his old homeland in the local dialect.

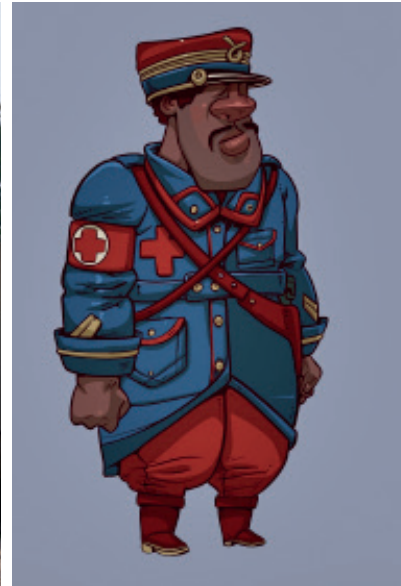
Marton Mehes
Danube Cultural Cluster, Vienna

The project "Fast vergessen" (Almost Forgotten) is a collaboration between the Cultural Officer for the Danube Region at the Danube Swabian Central Museum Ulm, the Danube Office Ulm/Neu-Ulm and the Danube Cultural Cluster Vienna. The initiators and project leaders are Swantje Volkmann (Ulm) and Márton Méhes (Vienna).



More information:





The impressive fortress with the beautiful sounding name Belvedere-Gschwent stands out from the landscape. It also seems frightening. This oppressive feeling becomes even more intense when you walk through its corridors. Belvedere is one of seven fortresses built by the Austro-Hungarian Empire between the years 1909 and 1912 like a chain in the natural landscape of Lavarone in southern Trentino. They served as a line of defense against the Italian kingdom. Already at that time it seems to have been known that there would be a war - the First World War from 1914 to 1918, which claimed about 17 million victims.

Today the fortress is a museum. On a tour, visitors quickly realize what it meant to be a war soldier. Black and white photos on the walls tell about the dreary everyday life of the soldiers. And then there are those sounds - bombs being fired from the opposing side. Rooms were only sporadically furnished and windows hermetically sealed. The winters bitterly cold. It was very noisy here during the bombardment and the solidly built walls vibrated from the attacks. As a soldier, one was stuck here in darkness. It felt like being in a mousetrap. Soldiers kept their service here for up to a year. And what "luck" it was! Less than 10 soldiers lost their lives to attacks here. But the darkness, disturbing sounds and vibrations caused cases of suicide.

And then the visitor enters a room where a screen invites them to start playing. Gaming in a war museum? "THE RUDE AWAKENING is an innovative project to lure the younger generation

back to the museum. We wanted to do this in an interactive way. Our goal was to confront them with history," explains Enzo Carbonera, Art Director of the project, which is co-funded by the EU's MEDIA program, a sub-program of Creative Europe.

A clever idea that he was able to implement together with nine European partners. The spirit of the project is to promote cooperation between European countries to prevent the madness of war from repeating itself.

The game was created by the Roman company CENTOUNOPERCENTO - 101% studios, which specializes in video games and virtual reality. "Video games are the biggest entertainment industry in the world," explains Daniele Azara, Creative Director of 101% studios. "We see this as an opportunity to bring serious issues closer to young people in this way."

THE RUDE AWAKENING is a multimedia journey tracing the daily lives of soldiers on the front lines from 1914 to 1919. In the museum, one playthrough takes about 15 minutes. Privately, count four to five hours to master all four episodes. Players are confronted with claustrophobic conditions in the fortresses,



At the Museum Werk Gschwent

the devastation of everyday life in the small towns near the front, and the collapse of hospitals due to the Spanish flu pandemic after the end of the war. Since August 2021, the Game can be played in three museums and historical centers that address the theme of armed conflict: Forte Belvedere in Italy, Gornjesavski Muzej in Slovenia, and the

Macedonian Center for Photography in the Republic of Northern Macedonia. Another four associations and NGOs dealing with the issues of memory and peace education through cultural promotion activities are also involved: ALDA (France), Memoire pour la vie (France), The World of NGOs (Austria) and the magazine danube connects (Germany). And, of course, the municipality of Lavarone, which hosts the historic sites, including Belvedere-Gschwent.

Today it is peaceful around the fortress. Sigmund Freud and the Emperor Franz Josef already appreciated its surroundings with their romantic landscapes for walks. Peace prevails and that is how it should stay. Belvedere or Beautiful View - finally the name of the fortress makes sense.

Mirella Sidro, journalist Sarajevo



View from "Forte Belvedere"

Project "Mysterious - Hidden Cultural Places in the Danube Region"

SEARCHING FOR CULTURE away from THE MAINSTREAM

Where might we find culture? This question is not very easy to answer along the Danube, but away from the mainstream, because some things are hidden, waiting to be discovered: places with potential for art and culture, equally interesting for artists and citizens. The project "Mysterious - Hidden Cultural Places in the Danube Region" searches for traces of culture.

The transnational art and culture project was initiated by Swantje Volkmann, Cultural Officer for the Danube Region at the Danube Swabian Central Museum in Ulm, and is supported by the Baden-Württemberg Foundation and the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of Baden Württemberg. The search for traces began in 2021 and is scheduled to continue until well into 2024.

Encounters with artists

Instead of conventional traveling exhibitions or symposia, artists and young people from the entire Danube region will come together again and again, work together and exchange ideas. The schedule for these meetings deliberately takes into account the four European Capitals of Culture from 2022 to 2024 located in the Danube region: 2022 Novi Sad (Vojvodina region, Serbia), 2023 Timișoara (Banat region, Romania) and Veszprém with the Balaton region (Hungary), 2024 Bad Ischl (Salzkammergut region/Austria). The reason is that these cities are still little known outside their region or country.

Teenagers and university students from the above-mentioned cities will prepare the meetings of artists from all art disciplines. They will research

particularly attractive but little-known, forgotten or not easily visible places in their hometown or region that are suitable for joint artistic performances. They have in mind, for example, places connected to hidden stories, legends or historical events, or which contribute to a better understanding of the history, cultural heritage and identity of the Danube region.

Finally, the project results are to be presented at the next but one International Danube Festival in Ulm and Neu-Ulm in 2024.

Thomas Zehender, journalist, Ulm

Youth Wave Timisoara



Youth Wave in Timisoara is a German-language radio program produced by students. It is sponsored by the Funkforum and the ifa in Stuttgart. The topics are wide-ranging and are chosen by the youth editors. The youth program has now been around for more than 15 years, and is broadcast twice a month on Radio Timisoara as well as a podcast. Astrid Kataro and Cosmin Tugui talk about their experiences as youth editors at Youth Wave.

dc: How did you come to work for the German-language Youth Wave?

Astrid: During a school internship, I wanted to learn what kind of work goes into preparing a radio program. For a week, I learned things like how to speak on the radio and how to write a contribution or a script.

What topics are particularly important to you in reporting?

A: Well, the topics in general are very different and complex at Jugendwelle. Actually, every member is free to write his or her own contribution. My favorite topics are the history and culture of the Banat Swabians.

How does the Romanian media landscape present itself to you as young people?

Cosmin: The youth press is not that developed in Romania. Because the statistics clearly show that young people are less and less interested in the classic media, the stations should slowly change their strategy to bring the digital natives closer as well. One concept that I like and that a broadcaster wants to implement in our country is social television, i.e. the mix between TV and social media.

What training are you currently taking part in?

A: I'm a student at the moment at the West University from Timisoara and I'm currently studying German and English language and literature. In my free time I am at the youth wave because it brings a change from the stressful university life with papers, exams, presentations. Working at Jugendwelle is an important hobby for me that I enjoy very much.

C: At the moment I am still at school and will graduate from high school next year.

What do you wish for your city Timisoara for the youth in the future?

A: I think it is important for the youth to have more cultural activities. It is important to get to know the culture and the history of the city you live in, or even on a national level. Such an activity is the Youth Wave. We provide young people with information on cultural, social, political issues. I wish for solidarity amongst young people in Timisoara and a multi-cultural life for them.

Do you want to continue working as editors? Or to encourage other young people to join?

A: New members are always welcome. The more people work together, the more interesting and diverse our Youth Wave will be. I don't know if I can imagine myself doing editorial work in the future, because at the moment I'm doing it more as a hobby. I like to be surprised by the future as far as my career is concerned. The only thing that is only important to me: working with the German language in the cultural or social field.

C: Yes, why not... I would like to get the possibility to study journalism in Germany one day. The work at Jugendwelle delights me, because I do everything out of passion. To the readers I would recommend to do the same thing, and that is do everything passionately and dream big things. "Only big dreams can touch people's souls," Marcus Aurelius once said.

*Interview
by Sabine Geller*

"Great river – deeply connected with the history of Europe"

**DANUBE
SCHOOLS SERIES**

The Danube Summer School (DSS) is a short-term study program for postgraduates and young professionals to study and discuss facts, challenges as well as projects concerning the Danube region. Due to the pandemic, instead of the usual 25, there were only 14 participants in early November who gathered for the 20th edition. They spent a week discussing with academics and decision-makers what is happening in the Danube Region and how to make it better.

Since 2014, the European Danube Academy has organized the DSS in cooperation with several universities in the Danube Region - especially Neu-Ulm University. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, it was cancelled in 2020 and took place this year in its 20th edition with fewer participants. These, however, devoted themselves all the more enthusiastically to the topic "Culture and History of Minorities in the Danube Region". During the program, lecturers from academia and politics discussed with participants from eight countries. They talked about the demography of minorities in the Danube Region, the protection of diversity, the Roma and Sinti, Europe's largest ethnic minority, and the current status of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). During the DSS, the participants implemented the newly gained knowledge through group work. This resulted in some ideas that can be put into practice in the future.

In addition to the technical presentations and group work, the program included a guided tour of the Vöhl Castle, a visit to the Danube Swabian Central Museum, a city tour of Ulm, and a panel discussion on the tenth anniversary of the EUSDR. On the last day of the program, the contents and ideas developed in the groups were presented and discussed. Afterwards, the participants took time for a feedback session and an evaluation of the week of work.

"I thought I knew the Danube, but it turned out to be very different from what I imagined," explained **Dr. Arjeta Hallunovi**, a lecturer in finance at the University Aleksander Moisiu Durres, Albania. "I want us all to return to this river because its historical role has been forgotten in recent years. It is a great river, deeply connected to the history of Europe."

Mirko Savković, founder of the Croatian rural development association Zeleno maće (Green Kitten), said, "The invitation to participate gave me the opportunity to discuss these and numerous other issues that connect all of us who live between the Black Forest and the Black Sea." He said he was particularly pleased to visit the Danube Swabian Central Museum, since at Zeleno maće the protection of local Danube Swabian memory is part of the statutes.

This year the DSS could be implemented especially thanks to the support of the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media. The previous editions took place in Ruse (Bulgaria) and Novi Sad (Serbia), the next ones are already in planning.

Contact: info@danubeschools.eu

"The invitation to participate gave me the opportunity to discuss these and numerous other issues that connect all of us who live between the Black Forest and the Black Sea."



"I want us all to return to this river because its historical role has been forgotten in recent years."

