

13th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

20 – 21 June 2024
Vienna, Austria

Full
programme

Cooperation in the Danube Region: Now more than ever!

Shaping Transformation,
Creating Opportunities



**Interreg
Danube Region**



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Cooperation in the Danube Region: now more than ever!

Shaping transformation, creating opportunities

20 – 21 June 2024, Vienna, Austria

Facing geopolitical threats, economic volatility and severe effects of global climate crisis, cooperation in the Danube region has become more important than ever. Working together across borders proves to be an opportunity to develop joint perspectives for a stable, sustainable and prosperous future not only for the Danube macro-region, but for all of Europe. The 13th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) provides a platform for all stakeholders of the region and beyond to discuss challenges ahead, to work on joint solutions and to create visions for a prosperous future.



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Programme Overview

WED, 19 June

18:30 – 22:00	Welcome reception @ charter ship MS Admiral Tegetthoff
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THU, 20 June

08:00 – 08:45	Registration @ Aula der Wissenschaften
08:45 – 09:30	Opening of the 13 th EUSDR Annual Forum
09:30	Press conference
09:30 – 10:45	The Danube Region: Diversity and integration Opening lecture, state of the region report, panel discussion
11:15 – 12:30	Mayors' talk: Cities as transformation hubs of the Danube Region High-level panel discussion
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch break
13:30 – 15:30	Green transition: Shaping transformation, creating opportunities Keynotes and thematic parallel sessions
16:00 – 17:30	Geopolitics, stability, prosperity and future perspectives in the Danube Region Keynote and high-level panel discussion
19:00 – 22:00	Danube party @ Palmenhaus

FRI, 21 June

08:00 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 10:45	Future perspectives for a fruitful cooperation in the Danube Region Take-aways from the parallel sessions, interviews, keynotes and impulses
11:15 – 12:15	Get involved: What do we need for a future-proof cooperation? World Café
12:15 – 12:55	Closing session: Wrap-up & take-aways Key messages from the 13 th EUSDR Annual Forum
12:55 – 13:00	Conference closing and farewell
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 17:00	Field trips: Site visits in Vienna and Lower Austria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visit 1: Boat trip in Donau-Auen National Park: LIFE WILDIsland • Site visit 2: Tour of the Port of Vienna: thinkport VIENNA • Site visit 3: Tour of the Danube Island: LIFE DICCA Project (Vienna) • Site visit 4: BOKU River Lab (Vienna) • Site visit 5: Danube Salon, Europaforum Wachau (Krems)

Detailed Conference Programme

WED, 19 June 2024

18:30 – 22:00

Welcome reception @ charter ship MS Admiral Tegetthoff

Meeting point: Vienna Shipping Center, 1020 Wien, Handelskai 265

Boat trip: Boarding starting at 18:30, departure at 19:00, return at 22:00

The welcome reception of the 13th EUSDR Annual Forum builds a bridge to the 11th Danube Participation Day and brings the participants of both events together in a relaxed atmosphere. We invite you to enjoy food and drinks, accompanied by music in a beautiful setting.



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THU, 20 June 2024

08:00 – 08:45

Registration @ Aula der Wissenschaften, Wollzeile 27A, 1010 Vienna

08:45 – 09:30

Opening of the 13th EUSDR Annual Forum

Welcome speeches

- **H.E. Michael Ludwig**, Mayor and Governor of Vienna
- **H.E. Norbert Totschnig**, Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management of Austria
- **H.E. Nikolaus Marschik**, Secretary General for Foreign Affairs, Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria
- **H.E. Elisa Ferreira**, European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms (Video Message)

Conference moderator

- **Greg Clark**, CBE, author and global advisor

Family photo

09:30

Press conference

- **H.E. Alexander Schallenberg**, Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria
- **H.E. Norbert Totschnig**, Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management of Austria
- **H.E. Michael Ludwig**, Mayor and Governor of Vienna

09:30 – 10:45

The Danube Region: Diversity and integration

The Danube Region, marked by its cultural diversity and dynamic history, its multifaceted regions and cities, is home to creative people and stunning natural beauty. Facing challenges like climate change and geopolitical shifts, cooperation in the region has become more important than ever. Recognising the need for joint visions, the Danube Region strives for collaboration and solidarity, leveraging its diverse strengths for a resilient future in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

Opening lecture

- **Hannes Swoboda**, MEP ret. and President of the International Institute for Peace

State of the region

- **Mario Holzner**, Executive Director, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies

Panel discussion

Distinguished panelists from EU, national and regional levels will explore the potentials and opportunities of cooperation in the Danube Region and discuss how the EU Strategy for the Danube Region fosters prosperous and cohesive development.

- **Imre Csalagovits**, Head of the Managing Authority, Interreg Danube Region Programme
- **Alexandra Schantl**, Coordinator European Governance and Urban Policy, KDZ Centre for Public Administration Research
- **Sławomir Tokarski**, Director of European Territorial Cooperation, DG REGIO, European Commission

10:45 – 11:15

Coffee Break

11:15 – 12:30

Mayors' talk: Cities as transformation hubs of the Danube Region

Strategic initiatives in the Danube Region unfold on regional scale, with cities serving as vital hubs for social, cultural, economic, and ecological innovations. Positioned at the forefront of climate crisis response, cities are also educational focal points, attracting skills and competences. This convergence creates fertile ground for innovation and business. How do capitals in the Danube Region leverage these opportunities, and how can collaborative strategies, such as the EUSDR, enhance their resilience in a competitive urban environment?

Introduction by Session Host

- **Michael Ludwig**, Mayor and Governor of Vienna

High-level panel discussion

Vienna's mayor and governor, Michael Ludwig, invites his colleagues from EUSDR capitals and partner cities to debate on the vital role of cities in the Danube Region.

- **Ion Ceban**, Mayor of Chişinău
- **Gergely Karácsony**, Mayor of Budapest
- **Benjamina Karić**, Mayor of Sarajevo
- **Michael Ludwig**, Mayor and Governor of Vienna
- **Wassil Terziew**, Mayor of Sofia
- **Tomislav Tomašević**, Mayor of Zagreb
- **Gennadiy Trukhanov**, Mayor of Odesa

12:30 – 13:30

Lunch Break

13:30 – 14:00

Green transition: Shaping transformation, creating opportunities

The overarching need to respond to the climate crisis encompasses all fields of society. Important areas for adaptation and innovation include the shift to renewable energy sources, circular economy practices or sustainable waterway

mobility. The dramatic increase of natural disasters and the decline of biodiversity in recent years require increased attention to protect our ecosystems. The development of skills and education, but also communication through art and culture can make their contribution to a green transformation. Explore how the EU Strategy for the Danube Region addresses these vital themes.

Introduction by session host

- **H.E. Leonore Gewessler**, Federal Minister for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology of Austria (Video Message)

Keynote 1: Why we need a green transition? Lessons from climate research

- **Mark Olefs**, Head of the Climate Research Department, Geosphere Austria

Keynote 2: The green transition as an opportunity in the EUSDR

- **Carolina Novac**, State Secretary, Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova

14:00 – 15:30

Thematic parallel sessions

The keynotes set the scene for interactive discussions in eight parallel working sessions. Followed by specific expert inputs and good practice examples or initiative, participants will discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the topic. The groups, supported by experts from the EU funding programmes, will also discuss potential solutions and good examples of how to approach the specific challenges. The overall aim of the interactive sessions is to create a shared understanding of challenges and opportunities and to forge alliances between stakeholders with similar interests within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

Sessions 1 – 3 CLIMATE CHANGE & ADAPTATION	Sessions 4 – 6 WATER & ECOLOGY	Sessions 7 and 8 SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY
How to accelerate community-led green energy initiatives in the EUSDR	New approaches for resilient waterway management	Skills and education for the green transition
Strategic actions towards a circular economy in EUSDR cities and regions	Is the water clean and passable enough for fish to survive?	Stream of consciousness – arts and culture as discursive spaces for transformation in the Danube Region
Place-based innovation for reindustrialisation projects in the Danube Region	Navigating nature's extremes: Understanding the dynamics of floods and droughts	

Session 1:

How to accelerate community-led green energy initiatives in the EUSDR

Session host: EUSDR Priority Area 2 – Sustainable Energy

The collective and citizen-driven energy actions are key elements of the clean energy transition, however yet less widespread everywhere in the Danube Region. The session will discuss various technical and socioeconomic aspects of creating appropriate conditions for renewable energy communities in the Danube Region and how to raise awareness of the benefits of such initiatives. This will be presented through project examples of the “European Energy Award in the Danube Region” and the “Just Energy Transition for Central Europe”, to further motivate interactive discussions with the audience.

- **Moderator: Annamária Nádor**, Head of Division, Business Development and Communications at Mining and Geological Survey of Hungary, Coordinator of EUSDR Priority Area 2 – Sustainable Energy
- **Impulse lecture: Setting the frame: how to empower municipalities in their green-energy actions – the European Energy Award (EEA) tool**
Simone Burster, Danube Office Ulm
- **Good practice project: Introduction on the “Just Energy Transition for Central Europe project” and its mobile application of “Global Challenges Mapping”**
Andrej Slančík, Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency
- **Discussants:**
Zoltán Haász, Director South Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency, Lead Partner of NRGCOM project
Irina Apostol, Green City Lab Moldova, Member of the Danube Youth Council
Horst Schindler, Project Officer, Danube Region Programme

Session 2:

Strategic actions towards a circular economy in EUSDR cities and regions

Session host: City of Vienna

The transition to a resource efficient and circular economy will be key for cities and regions to reach climate neutrality. This requires accounting for consumption-based emissions and developing actions for strategic hotspot sectors. It also means cross-border cooperation and responsibility. Due to its resource intensive nature, the City of Vienna has put an emphasis on the construction sector by establishing the programme “Do-Tank Circular City Vienna 2020-2030”. Based on the experiences made in this programme, the session aims to discuss strategic actions by cities and regions for a circular transition in areas like public procurement, waste management and spatial planning.

- **Moderator: Philipp Preuner**, Director’s Office for Climate Affairs, City of Vienna
- **Impulse lecture: Bernadette Luger**, Executive Group for Construction and Technology, City of Vienna, Coordinator of Do-Tank Circular City Vienna
- **Good practice project: Rebuilt – Circular and digital renewal of central Europe construction and building sector**
Martina Le Gall Maláková, President at Industry Innovation Cluster Slovakia
- **Discussants:**

Florian Kamleitner, ecoplus – Business Agency of Lower Austria
Katalin Kovács-Kasza, Project Officer, Danube Region Programme

Session 3:

Place-based innovation for reindustrialisation projects in the Danube Region

Session host: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia with support of the EUSDR Priority Area 8 – Competitiveness of Enterprises

Place-based innovation plays an increasingly important role in regional development. It is a concept to examine local resources, infrastructure, institutions, talent pool and leverage on the strengths of regional actors to foster innovation and economic transformation. Public interventions like regional or local funding schemes, infrastructure development, collaboration initiatives, and regulatory support play a crucial role in enabling innovation within a specific place or location. With an interactive approach, this session explores what makes a good place-based innovation ecosystem and how less developed regions and smaller municipalities can develop a place-based innovation system to drive growth and economic prosperity for local reindustrialisation projects.

- **Moderator:** Grit Ackermann, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia
- **Impulse lecture:** Place-based innovation in less developed regions
Jonathan Loeffler, CEO of Steinbeis Europa Zentrum
- **Good Practice Project:** ReInd-BBG – Reindustrialisation Following the Brownfield is Better than Greenfield Principle
Grit Ackermann, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia
- **Discussant:** Johannes Gabriel, Senior Project Officer, Danube Region Programme
- **Workshop facilitators:** Emilie Stecher., BOKU University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna and N.N., MKBT Make Better Association

Session 4:

New approaches for resilient waterway management.

Session host: EUSDR Priority Area 1a – Waterways Mobility

Blue Challenges, Green Solutions: Transforming Danube Mobility amidst Low-Water and Climate Change

Join us for an engaging session on Danube waterway transport, highlighting its role as a green mode of transportation vital for the European economy. Explore opportunities such as greening initiatives, innovative waterway management methods, and nature-based solutions to combat climate change. Discover how Danube navigation offers numerous advantages and contributes positively to sustainability. Don't miss this chance to delve into the future of sustainable inland navigation along the Danube.

Format: This will not be another panel discussion. Unlock the excitement with your smartphones as we embark on a quiz adventure!

- **Moderator:** Gert-Jan Mulierman, Head of Department Strategy & International Affairs, viadonau and EUSDR Priority Area 1a – Waterway Mobility
- **Impulse lecture:** Viktoria Weissenburger, Head of Team Action Programmes & Projects, viadonau, EUSDR Priority Area 1a – Waterway Mobility

- **Good practice project: FAIRway Danube II**
- **Discussants:**
Manfred Seitz, Director General, Danube Commission
Lisa-Maria Putz-Egger, Professor for Sustainable Transport, University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria

Session 5:

Is the water clean and passable enough for fish to survive?

Session host: EUSDR Priority Area 4 – Water Quality

The session aims to emphasise the importance of connectivity restoration and water quality in the Danube River for habitat conservation, particularly focusing on migratory fish species, including sturgeons as the Danube flagship species. The session will start with a brief introductory video on the negative human impacts on the living conditions of migratory fish. The impulse lecture will set the scene, followed by an overview of the importance of fish conservation, the maintenance of water quality and connectivity restoration including projects' achievements in the Danube River. The conclusion of the session will summarise required follow-up actions.

- **Moderator: Danka Thalmeinerová**, EUSDR Priority Area 4 – Water Quality
- **Introduction: Birgit Vogel**, International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and **Márton Pesel**, EUSDR Priority Area 4 – Water Quality
- **Impulse lecture: Martin Mišík**, Association of Bratislava boating clubs
- **Discussants:**
Raimund Mair, World Bank Water Global Practice – water pollution
Marlene Haimann, BOKU Vienna – University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Institute of Hydraulic Engineering and River Research (IWA) – sediments
Katarína Mravcová, Water Research Institute, Bratislava – barriers
Balázs Horváth, World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) – migratory fish/sturgeon conservation
Gusztáv Csomor, Senior Project Officer, Danube Region Programme

Session 6:

Navigating nature's extremes: Understanding the dynamics of floods and droughts

Session host: EUSDR Priority Area 5 – Environmental Risks

Floods, droughts, low flow events, and water scarcity are becoming more severe due to climate change and socio-economic pressures. Recent extreme flooding in the Danube River Basin has caused significant damage. Effective drought management, considering it as a slow-onset disaster, requires proactive strategies rather than reactive measures. This includes understanding drought risks, using measured and remote-sensed data, and fostering knowledge sharing. In a session moderated by László Balatonyi, experts will discuss managing environmental risks, including flood and drought, and share best practices from international and regional perspectives, followed by an open round table discussion.

- **Moderator:** László Balatonyi, Coordinator of EUSDR Priority Area 5 – Environmental Risks
- **Impulse lecture:** Understanding the Dynamics of Floods and Droughts
Helmut Habersack, Head of the Institute of Hydraulic Engineering and River Research at BOKU
- **Good practice project 1:** Overview report on drought/low water levels in the Danube River basin
Ádam Kovács, ICPDR - Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
- **Good practice project 2:** Drought risks, impacts, and policy in the Western Balkan
Dor Fridman, IIASA – International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
- **Good practice project 3:** Country climate and development report
Megha Mukim, Senior Economist, World Bank
- **Good practice project 4:** Good practice of Hungary: Operational drought and water scarcity management system
Péter Molnár, General Directorate of Water Management Hungary

Session 7:

Skills and education for the green transition

Session hosts: EUSDR Priority Area 9 – People & Skills (in cooperation with EUSDR Priority Area 7 – Knowledge Society)

The objective of the session is to explore the crucial role of education and skills to respond to and enable the green transition, which is fundamentally reshaping both education systems and the labour market. Developing green skills is essential for meeting the rapidly changing skill demands and employment needs and for filling Green Jobs. This is pivotal for fostering a climate-neutral and sustainable Danube Region and avoiding a green skills gap. From different angles, speakers will illustrate the efforts needed at different levels for equipping individuals with the competencies for navigating the green transition, leaving no one behind.

- **Moderators:**
Roland Hanak, Federal Ministry for Labour and Economy of Austria
Jürgen Schick, Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research of Austria
– Coordinators of EUSDR Priority Area 9 – People & Skills
- **Impulse lecture:** European VET Excellence Platform for Green Innovation – GREENOVET
Julia Fellingner, 3s Research & Consulting
- **Good practice project 1:** Foundation for the Environment
Paul Köfler, Aufleb-Umweltstiftung, Vienna
- **Good practice project 2:** Utility Management Training – a model for educating future water utility leaders
Katerina Schilling, The Voice of the Danube, International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area (IAWD)
- **Discussants:**
Jana Fingerhut, Bertelsmann Stiftung Green Skills – Competences for a Sustainable Economy
Stephen Halligan, Senior Project Officer, Danube Region Programme

Session 8:

Stream of consciousness – arts and culture as discursive spaces for transformation in the Danube Region

Collegium Hungaricum Vienna, in cooperation with EUSDR Priority Area 3 - Culture and Tourism

The geographically and socially diverse Danube Region is a perfect place to think about the future of Earth and humanity.

This workshop shows how cultural projects in the area serve as discursive spaces for rethinking and future concepts. Arts and culture mediate between science and common sense, bring actors together, ask questions and sensitise people to the problems.

Among others, the many European Capitals of Culture in the Danube Region and some Danube cooperation projects of Interreg or New European Bauhaus are currently suitable platforms for this future dialogue. But how do we move from awareness to action? Can art/culture also be helpful here?

- **Moderator:** Márton Méhes, Director of Collegium Hungaricum Vienna
- **Introduction:** Irina Cozma, Coordinator EUSDR Priority Area 3 - Culture & Tourism
- **Impulse lecture:** Eszter Dávida, KÉK – Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre
- **Good practice project:** Bad Ischl as a compact example for a platform of change
Christina Jaritsch, Bad Ischl Salzkammergut 2024, Head of Programme Ecology, Agriculture & Social Affairs, Head of Evaluation
- **Discussants:**
Diána Berecz, BALATORIUM project
Rainer Prohaska, Artist
Natália Liholot, Project Officer, Danube Region Programme

15:30 – 16:00

Coffee Break

16:00 – 17:30

Geopolitics, stability, prosperity and future perspectives in the Danube Region

This high-level discussion, open to ministers, policy-makers and high-level experts, on the interplay between geopolitics, stability and prosperity will focus on future perspectives of the Danube Region, currently undergoing a period of fundamental transformation. Participants will analyse strategic necessities, regional dynamics, challenges and economic opportunities in an interdisciplinary dialogue. Together, we will be looking for joint pathways for a prosperous and secure Danube Region.

Keynote

- **H.E. Johannes Hahn**, European Commissioner for Budget and Administration

High-level plenary panel

- **H.E. Mihai Popșoi**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova
- **Velina Tchakarova**, Geopolitical Strategist
- **Sava Mitrović**, European Policy Centre – CEP, Belgrade
- **Timo Blenk**, Agora Strategy Group
- **Mislav Kovač**, Croatian EUSDR and EUSAIR National Coordination, Directorate for European Territorial Cooperation, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Republic of Croatia
- **Igor Studennikov**, Centre for Regional Studies

17:30

End of official programme – Day 1

18.00 – 19.30

Closed session of the Danube Foreign Ministers

19:00 – 22:00

Danube party @ Palmenhaus

Burggarten 1, 1010 Wien

We round off the evening together in a one-of-a-kind location. In the former Art Nouveau greenhouse, we invite you to enjoy food and drinks. Look forward to a diverse program featuring the ceremonial handover of the Danube-WILDIsland-Ramsar Initiative patronage to the ICPDR, a performance by the Danube Art Master winning troupe from Serbia, and various other live acts.

Dress code: Casual chic. Attention: Gravel floor.



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FRI, 21 June 2024

08:00 – 09:00

Registration

09:00 – 10:45

Future perspectives for a fruitful cooperation in the Danube Region

Now is the perfect time for a structured discussion about future frameworks for cooperation in the Danube region and for providing inspirational input of relevance for the EUSDR work to a debate on the upcoming post-2027 period and the new EU Cohesion Policy in this respect. The Session aims for a forward-looking exchange by gathering inputs from various perspectives: institutional insights, research perspectives, impulses from stakeholders directly involved in project work, and the future vision of youth in the Danube Region. These impressions set the stage for an open discussion on future action areas and necessary activities among participants.

For stimulating the discussion, the following guiding questions are proposed:

- What are the framework conditions for cooperation in the Danube Region? What will change in the future, what will remain unchanged?
- How will cooperation in the Danube Region evolve in the future? Which stakeholders need to be involved? What further instruments should be utilised?
- What steps do we need to take now to move in this direction?

Join us as we shape the future of cooperation in the Danube Region!

Introduction by the session host

- **Georg Schadt**, Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, Department for Regional Policy and Spatial Planning

Brief bridging between Day 1 and Day 2: Take-aways from the Green Transition parallel sessions: Opportunities and main messages for shaping the future.

- **Katharina Lenz**, Pillar Officer, Danube Strategy Point and **Claudia Singer-Smith**, Coordinator, EUSDR Priority Area 10 – Institutional Capacity and Cooperation

Institutional perspectives – interviews with selected stakeholders of cooperation

- **The future of EU Cohesion Policy, Interreg programmes and macro-regional strategies**
Moray Gilland, Head of Unit for Macro-regions, Transnational, Interregional and External Cooperation, and Enlargement, European Commission/DG REGIO
- **Perspectives of cities and regions**
Christiane Breznik, City of Vienna, European Affairs (MA 27)

- **Enlargement perspective**

Sanda Šimić Stambolić, EUSDR National Coordinator, Ministry of European Integration of Serbia

Keynote: Future perspectives for Macro-Regional Cooperation – a frame for discussion

- **Kai Böhme**, Spatial Foresight, Heisdorf/Berlin/Paris
- **Franziska Sielker**, Institute for Spatial Planning, Technical University Vienna

Kicking off the open debate: Inspirational impulses from the field – presentations by stakeholders who bring the Strategy to the ground

Distinguished stakeholders being directly involved in projects offer their concrete experience how to bring the Strategy to the ground and give insights in the potential of the Strategy to immediately impact the lives of people in the Danube Region. These short impulse reports shall motivate the EUSDR stakeholders by showing by example what has already been achieved, but also point towards areas of need.

Impulse 1: Skills and brain-drain

- **Georgios Zisimos**, Head of Unit for Policy Advice, European Training Foundation (ETF)

Impulse 2: Role of civic engagement in the Danube Region

- **Nataliia Pokhyliuk**, founder and chairwoman of ABLE – Act, Build, Lead, Engage; Ukrainian NGO in Germany

Impulse 3: Friends of the Danube: Environmental activism as brand and business purpose

- **Srdan Stanković**, founder and director of Supernatural, environmental NGO in Belgrade

Impulse 4: Navigating the Future: A 2040 Vision for the Danube Region by the Youth Council

- **Philip Tudor**, member of the Danube Youth Council (DYC)

Introduction to the World Café discussion

10:45 – 11.15

Coffee Break

11:15 – 12:15

Get involved: What do we need for a future-proof cooperation in the Danube Region?

Join us for a World Café discussion on visions and ideas for cooperation in the Danube Region. Key stakeholders of the Danube Region, such as EUSDR Priority Areas and funding instruments, will host tables where discussions will revolve around the above mentioned guiding questions.

Everyone is invited to contribute. This is an opportunity to engage in future discourse and take away valuable insights! Results will be included into the conference report and fed into relevant follow-up discussions by the Austrian EUSDR Presidency.

- **Iris Marstaller and Viktoria Weissenburger (EUSDR PA 1a):** Resilient waterways as a strategic resource for the Danube Region
- **Annamária Nádor (EUSDR PA2) and László Balatonyi (EUSDR PA5):** Climate Change Adaptation
- **Jakob Weiss and Barbara Willsberger (EUSDR PA9):** Investing in People and Skills – More Crucial Than Ever!
- **Claudia Singer-Smith and Jernej Grahor (EUSDR PA10):** Supporting EU Enlargement through macro-regional cooperation – What do we need to involve civil society organisations and sub-national stakeholders to support the path towards EU accession?
- **Michal Pavlik and Simona Ene (DRP):** Danube Region Programme – evolving with time for the benefit of the citizens of the region.
- **Dana Kascakova and Frank Schneider (Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE):** Cooperation is central: Developing solutions together for the common challenges of the Danube Region and beyond.
- **Kathrin Huber and David Freudl (Interreg AT-CZ):** Upscaling, downscaling, clustering: advancing cross-border cooperation between Austria and Czechia.
- **Danube Youth Council:** Involvement of young people: What are chances and challenges for a future-proof cooperation in the Danube Region?

12:15 – 12.55

Closing session: Wrap-up & take-aways Key messages from the 13th EUSDR Annual Forum

Take-aways for the future of the Danube Region from expert perspectives

- **Imre Csalagovits**, Head of the Managing Authority, Interreg Danube Region Programme
- **Nirvana Kapitan Butković**, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, of Croatia, Coordinator of EUSDR Priority Area 8 – Competitiveness of Enterprises
- **Robert Lichtner**, Coordinator, Danube Strategy Point
- **Roland Arbter**, Austrian EUSDR National Coordinator, Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management
- **Harald Stranzl**, Austrian EUSDR National Coordinator, Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs

12:55 – 13:00

Conference closing and farewell

- Ernst Woller, City of Vienna, President of the Provincial Parliament

13:00 – 13:45

Lunch Break

Field Trips

In the afternoon of 21st June, five site visits are offered, to allow participants to discover interesting sites in and around Vienna, closely connected to the Danube River and the Danube Region.

14:00 – 17:00

Arrival at the
conference venue
at 17:45 latest!

Site visit 1: Boat trip in Lobau National Park: LIFE WILDisland

The excursion will take place in the riparian landscape of the Donau-Auen National Park, starting at Stopfenreuth on the Danube. We will paddle down the Danube and its side branches in large inflatable boats (10 people per boat, guided by experience rangers, no prior experience required) and take a short walk. Several successful revitalization projects have restored the banks here to a natural state, reconnecting the side branches with the Danube. Within just a few years, the Danube has significantly reshaped these areas, and we will see extensive bank cracks, gravel banks and impressive river meanders. White-tailed eagles, Bee-eaters and Kingfishers have (re)conquered the habitat and, with a bit of luck, we may even spot some of these species.

We will discuss the various revitalization projects of the Donau-Auen National Park, the international cooperation for river restoration and preservation, as well as the first European river-based Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative. It is placing outstanding value on the conservation and restoration of pristine islands along the entire length of the Danube and providing for joint coordinated measures to help improve the invaluable ecosystem services and biodiversity of the Danube.

Modalities: Small boat tour (dinghies), alternative in case of flooding: on foot. Bus transfer provided by the organisers



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14:00 – 17:00

Arrival at the
conference venue
at 17:45 latest!

Site visit 2: Tour of the Port of Vienna: thinkport VIENNA

thinkport VIENNA is an open mobility laboratory that confronts urban logistics challenges and develops comprehensive, long-term solutions. Located within the Port of Vienna, thinkport VIENNA promotes logistics solutions for a livable city and creates space for sustainable solutions. This tour explores the open innovation spaces and real test environments from thinkport VIENNA for urban logistics concepts at the Port of Vienna.

The Port of Vienna is a company of the City of Vienna, a subsidiary of Wien Holding. With the Freudenau Harbour, Albern Harbour, and the Lobau oil terminal, the Port of Vienna is the largest freight logistics hub in eastern Austria. Thanks to its connection to three TEN-T corridors, the Port of Vienna is a very attractive transport hub for international trade and transport routes.

The tour covers a visit to Freudenau Harbour and Albern Harbour. Freudenau Harbour is the centre of the cargo handling facilities on the Danube in Vienna. It contains handling amenities for bulk goods and raw materials, the container terminal, a car terminal, warehouses and depots, distribution centres for brand articles, the largest free port in Austria with a customs office, its own police station, and the offices of Hafen Wien. Albern Harbour handles building materials, agricultural and steel products. There are five large grain silos on the site with a capacity of 90,000 tons, making Albern the most important grain handling location in Eastern Austria. The tour also allows to visit the land reclamation and terminal expansion project.

Modalities: Bus tour.



© wienholding

14:00 – 16:00

Arrival at the
conference venue
at 16:45 latest!

Site visit 3: Tour of the Danube Island: LIFE DICCA Project (Vienna)

The LIFE DICCA project is aimed at combating the adverse effects of climate change on the valuable ecosystem of the Danube Island in Vienna. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Danube Island was designed as part of Vienna's flood protection system but quickly evolved into one of Vienna's favourite recreational spaces. Through this six-year EU-funded initiative, LIFE DICCA aims to develop climate change adaptation strategies for inner-city ecosystems around the example of the Danube Island. In this excursion, witness firsthand the implementation of targeted measures to safeguard this vital urban green space and recreational haven, while also preserving its biodiversity amidst the challenges posed by climate change.

Modalities: Walking tour

Bus transfer to/from the Danube Island provided by the organisers



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14:00 – 17:00

Arrival at the
conference venue
at 17:45 latest!

Site visit 4: BOKU River Lab (Vienna)

The BOKU River Lab offers unparalleled research opportunities in the fields of flood protection, river morphology, sediment transport, hydropower, and waterway management. Led by experts in the field, participants will navigate through the facility's diverse research zones, including its flagship 90-meter main channel and specialised laboratories, gaining insights into the laboratory's pivotal role in advancing our understanding of river processes, sediment dynamics, and ecological preservation.

Join this excursion to discuss the laboratory's contributions to critical areas such as flood management, sustainable energy, and climate change adaptation. Through this immersive experience, explore the intricate interplay between research, innovation, and environmental stewardship in shaping our water-dependent world.

Modalities: Lecture and site visit, handicap accessible
Bus transfer provided by the organisers



© BOKU

14:00 –

Site visit 5: Danube Salon, Europaforum Wachau (Krems)

As part of the Europa-Forum Wachau 2023, the Danube Salon will take place on Friday, June 21st on the subject "CHANGE THE POINT OF VIEW - Women's Insights into the Future of Europe".

Since 2021, the Danube Salon has been held as a highlight of the Europa-Forum Wachau and under the patronage of the Working Community of the Danube Regions. As part of the Salon, pressing issues of our time are discussed during a ship cruise through the Wachau UNESCO World Heritage Site.

This year, the Danube Salon will focus on female perspectives for the future of Europe. The proportion of women in decision-making positions has risen significantly in many areas over the years. Women offer different perspectives on existing problems and therefore have a lot to contribute to positive developments in Europe. Although in recent years many more women have gotten involved, there is still a gap compared to men, especially in areas as such as representation in parliaments all over Europe.

We will discuss with renowned experts about the benefits of deepening women's involvement in leadership positions for Europe, the EU and the Danube Region.

Further information will be updated on the EFW 2024 homepage: <https://www.europaforum.at/en/veranstaltungen/europa-forum-wachau-2024/>

Modalities:

Attention: Site visit 5 takes place from 14.00 – 21.00 (Return Option 1, without after party) or 01.00 am (Return Option 2, with after party)

14:00 (approx.): Departure by shuttle bus to Krems

15:00 – 16.30 (approx.): Exploration of Krems

16:45: Boarding of the ship for the Danube Salon on a Danube cruise through Wachau

17:00: Departure of the ship

20:30: (approx.): Return of the ship to Krems

Return Option 1

21:00: Return from Krems to Vienna by shuttle bus (arrival in Vienna ca. 22:00/22:30)

Return Option 2

21:00 – 01:00: After party with drinks and DJ on the ship at the harbour in Krems
Individual departure by train (the last train that goes directly to Vienna Franz-Josefs-Bahnhof is the REX4 at 22:52)

– 21:00

Arrival at the
conference venue
at 22:30 latest!



Wachau, Dürnstein, Danube © Uoaei1, Wikimedia Commons

Side Events

Next to the EUSDR Annual Forum a series of events will take place, including ...

... [the 11th Danube Participation Day](#),

organised by EUSDR Priority Area 10 "Institutional Capacity and Cooperation" and the Danube Civil Society Forum on 19 June 2024

... [the Danube Day](#),

coordinated by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (including [activities in Vienna](#) on 21 June 2024)

... [the Danube Salon on 21 June 2024](#),

organised by the Federal Province of Lower Austria.

... [Danube Transfer Centre Network Ceremony](#):

Accelerating Green and Digital Transition in the Danube Region, on 19 June 2024, organised by the Steinbeis Europa Zentrum, with support of the EUSDR Priority Area 8 – Competitiveness of Enterprises. Separate registration is required to participate in this event.

Additional Information

Organisation

The EUSDR Annual Forum 2024 is organised by the Austrian Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, represented by the Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management and the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, together with the City of Vienna as host city.

Programme Updates

Regular updates will be published on the [official website of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region](#).

Venue

Unless otherwise stated, all sessions take place in the [Aula der Wissenschaften](#), Wollzeile 27A, 1010 Vienna

Working Language

English

Registration

Participation in the EUSDR Annual Forum is free of charge. Please register here: danube-region.eu/danube-events/13th-eusdr-annual-forum/

Accommodation

Please note that June is the peak travel season in Vienna and it is recommended to book hotels well ahead: wien.info/en/travel-info/hotels-accomodations

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