



12th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

24-25 October 2023

Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia, and online

Report

Attendants: ca. 350 on-site participants

Attachment:

- ❖ Joint Statement of the Ministers responsible for the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region



Slovenian Presidency
of the EU Strategy
for the Danube Region



Interreg programme
Danube Region

Co-funded by
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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
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The 12th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)

- EUSDR Entering the Decade of the Future -

24 –25 October 2023, Slovenia & online
Venue: Congress Centre Brdo, Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia

The 12th EUSDR Annual Forum, jointly organised by the Slovenian EUSDR Presidency and the Danube Strategy Point with support from the European Commission and the Danube Region Programme, was held on 24-25 October 2023 in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia. Further information: <https://danube-region.eu/danube-events/12th-eusdr-annual-forum/>



Slovenian Presidency
of the EU Strategy
for the Danube Region



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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
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DAY 1: 24 October 2023

❖ Meeting of Ministers responsible for the EUSDR

During the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum, the annual joint meeting of ministers responsible for the EUSDR was held. As a result of the meeting, a Joint Statement of the Ministers responsible for the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region¹ was adopted. The Statement condemns in the strongest terms the continuation of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and addresses issues such as energy challenges, improving the transport infrastructure of the Danube Region, the European Green Deal, EU enlargement, youth involvement and stakeholder engagement in the EUSDR.

❖ Beyond Boundaries: Rethinking the Danube's Potential with Emerging Voices

This session explored the situation of young people in the Danube Region, the manifold challenges they are confronted with, as well as possible ways to tackle these challenges. Three of the panellists represented the young generation from different Danube Region countries, while the other three speakers brought in the thematic expertise from different sectors (academia, civil society, European Commission). Just before the Annual Forum, on 22-23 October 2023, the Danube Youth Council members and other youth representatives had taken part in the POPRI Challenge, a two-day event designed to jointly elaborate ideas and recommendations on how to tackle brain drain (see: side events). The presentation of the outcomes of the POPRI Challenge made clear: While brain drain is a multi-layered and complex issue, cross-sectoral approaches and enhanced cooperation in the Region are necessary to create supportive environments and make it more attractive for young people from all Danube Region countries to develop their potential in their own countries. Furthermore, as the Danube Youth Council's first mandate year is coming to an end on 31 October 2023, the Danube Youth Council members took this opportunity to underline their firm commitment to be actively involved in the EUSDR and to make use of events like the EUSDR Annual Forum to represent young people's perspectives and present their concerns, ideas and recommendations to policy makers from the Danube Region.

Panellists:

Prof. Dr. Zdravko Kačič, Rector, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Elisa Cocco, Programme Assistant, DG REGIO, European Commission

Nataliia Pokhyliuk, ABLE NGO, Germany

Dávid Kecskeméti, Danube Youth Council member, Hungary

Alexandrina Vărzari, Danube Youth Council member, Moldova

Rastko Petrović, High school Bora Stanković, Niš, Serbia; former winner of the EUSAIR POPRI challenge

Moderators:

Urška Jež, CEO, Transformation Lighthouse

Maty Mihal'ko, Danube Youth Council member, Slovakia

¹ <https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/EUSDR-Joint-statement-2023.pdf>

❖ Official Opening of the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum

Tanja Fajon (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Slovenia) welcomed the participants and expressed gratitude for the support received during the natural disasters in Slovenia in 2023. The importance of macro-regional cooperation in facing challenges posed by migration, disastrous floods or unprovoked military aggression from Russia was emphasised. Strengthening cooperation across EU borders and addressing regional issues collectively was underlined as a necessity and not an option. The importance of involving young people in shaping the future of the Danube Region was highlighted.

Aleksander Jevšek (Minister of Cohesion and Regional Development, Slovenia) emphasised the importance of cohesion policy and regional development in advancing the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. The integration of macro-regional priorities into national planning as well as the role of financial dialogue and embedding processes were highlighted. The importance of transnational cooperation programmes, particularly the Danube Region Programme, in supporting the implementation of different EU policies and macro-regional strategies was emphasised. The broader cooperation between countries, regions, cities, and villages, was stressed and the collaborative nature of the EUSDR was highlighted. To address the ongoing crises, working together, sharing experiences, and building partnerships for mutual growth and learning, was encouraged.

Elisa Ferreira (European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms) – video message² – underlined the achievements of collaborative efforts within EUSDR and highlighted the ongoing challenges, such as skills shortages in small and medium-sized companies and high number of unemployed young Europeans. The need to diversify energy sources in the face of climate change and the Russian aggression was emphasised. The Danube Region Strategy's goal to support European members, including Ukraine, Moldova, and Western Balkan countries, was stressed as active participation in discussions on the future of cohesion policy was encouraged. Gratitude to the organisers of the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum and to Slovenia for their contributions during their EUSDR Presidency was expressed as well as best wishes to the incoming Austrian EUSDR Presidency conveyed.

❖ High-level plenary panel: The EU Enlargement Process & EUSDR

The high-level plenary panel highlighted the role of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and the importance of regional cooperation for connecting people, economic developments, promoting stability and security, as well as for addressing the challenges and concerns in the Region. The panellists shared their perspectives on the significance of the Strategy in addressing common challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, energy and food crises, and the EU enlargement process. The importance of regional strategies like the EUSDR in fostering collaboration, addressing common challenges, and enhancing the capabilities of candidate countries during the EU accession process was emphasised. The role of the EUSDR in knowledge-sharing, aligning policies with EU standards, accessing funding, and fostering regional cooperation to support the EU accession processes of the participating countries was further highlighted. The panellists expressed optimism about the current momentum for EU enlargement while recognising the challenges and the need for a more flexible and gradual approach. The importance of convincing both citizens and EU Member States about the benefits of enlargement for regional stability, security, and prosperity was stressed. The transformative impact of the war on Ukrainians' perceptions of security and the role of EU initiatives in fostering regional cooperation and understanding common challenges was highlighted. The engagement

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_23_5248

of young people is considered crucial for shaping a joint future and for ensuring the success of strategies as the EUSDR and the broader EU enlargement process.

Panellists:

Tanja Fajon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Slovenia

Alexander Schallenberg, Minister of European and International Affairs, Austria

Gordan Grlić Radman, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Croatia

Elmedin Konaković, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ana Novaković Đurović, Minister of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism and Coordinator of the Ministry of European Affairs, Montenegro

Tanja Miščević, Minister of European Integration, Republic of Serbia

Eugeniu Harabara, Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Moldova

Andrii Taran, Ambassador of Ukraine to the Republic of Slovenia

Moderators:

Igor E. Bergant, journalist and TV news presenter

Bernarda Žarn, television presenter

❖ Handover Ceremony of EUSDR Presidency to Austria

Tanja Fajon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Slovenia handed over the EUSDR Presidency to Alexander Schallenberg, Minister of European and International Affairs, Austria, by handing over the steering wheel of all EUSDR Presidencies. Under the slogan “Shaping Transformation, Creating Opportunities: A Prosperous, Resilient and Secure Danube Region”, Austria holds the EUSDR Presidency of the Strategy until 31 December 2024. Further information on the priorities, the Presidency programme and planned events will be made available soon³.

❖ Press Conference

As part of the media coverage of the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum, a press conference was organised and attended by 30 journalists from all member states of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Tanja Fajon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Slovenia and Alexander Schallenberg, Minister of European and International Affairs, addressed the questions of the journalists regarding the thematic priorities of the Slovenian and Austrian EUSDR Presidencies, concrete examples of implementation and the relevance of the Strategy for cohesion and accession in the Danube Region.

❖ Danube Region Programme – A new beginning for cooperation and EU integration

The session explored the perspectives of new beginnings: a new Danube Region Programme (DRP), with beneficial changes for the non-EU countries, as well as of reaching a new ‘momentum’ in the accession challenge. It had been mentioned that, despite the latest challenges (COVID-19, unjustified and unprovoked military invasion of Ukraine by Russia), having the potential to disrupt and delay collaboration, the solidarity and cooperation had increased, macro-regional strategies being nowadays more focused on the enlargement process which could catalyse the expansion of partnerships. The positive effects of the EU enlargement on the Danube Region emphasised by the speakers were decreasing the level of fragmentation and reducing gaps between regions, achieving regional stability,

³ <https://danube-region.eu/the-eusdr-presidency/>

better addressing regional specific challenges, facilitating the policy alignment and strengthening the administrative capacity, a common understanding of the economy, learning from the experience of the 'old' Member States, creating a major geographic single-market region entirely located within the EU. If EU enlargement fails to take place, it could lead to frustration and disillusionment with EU cooperation, both at a political level and among the population, which would possibly be reflected in a lower number of projects being implemented. It was pointed out that the main challenges for EU accession are the implementation of the *acquis* and of the policies that followed, reducing brain drain, poverty and migration, deepening and extending the reforms and transformation of the economy design in order to create the regulatory institutions, norms and policies, which is a feature of a market – oriented economy.

Panellists:

Simona Ene, Head of the Danube Region Programme Joint Technical Secretariat, Hungary

Gusztáv Csomor, Senior Project Officer, Danube Region Programme Joint Technical Secretariat, Hungary

Rostyslav Tomenchuk, Director General of the Directorate for International Technical Assistance Coordination, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers, Ukraine

Moray Gilland, European Commission, Head of Unit of the D1 Macro Regional and Transnational Interregional and External Cooperation and Enlargement, Brussels (*online*)

Marina Ghidirim, Head of the Cross - border Cooperation European Integration and the Greater Regions from the Ministry of Finance, Republic of Moldova (*online*)

Moderator:

Stephen Jonathan Halligan, Danube Region Programme

❖ **Bottom-up recovery and transformation of Ukraine – Supporting Ukraine and Moldova on their way to the EU**

The session explored the role of local and regional stakeholders and non-state actors in the recovery of Ukraine (UA) and its path towards the EU. During the discussion, it was highlighted that the recovery of critical infrastructure, water supply, energy sector and housing are among the most urgent needs for the UA recovery process. Here, the EU provides the financial framework, the government the strategic approach and the communities are the drivers of development. UA municipalities have a good level of self-organisation and UA civil society organisations are, among others, involved in the assessment of the impact of the war, especially on the environment. Environmental transformation, democratic transformation and social transformation were another focus of the discussion. Furthermore, it became clear that Moldova (MD) is also suffering from the Russian attack on UA, but nevertheless, MD is supporting UA in terms of connectivity and transport. For a better cooperation between UA and MD, a common financial instrument for cross-border cooperation between MD and UA would be needed. The EUSDR is a good framework for cooperation, which is now needed more than ever.

Panelists:

Eugeniu Harabara, Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Moldova

Oleksandr Nikolaiev, Deputy Head of the Department of International Cooperation and European Integration, Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development, Ukraine

Igor Studennikov, Executive Director, Centre for Regional Studies (Odessa), Ukraine

Stefan August Lütgenau, Founding Director of Foster Europe Foundation, Danube Civil Society Forum

Nina Čepon, *Executive Director, Centre for European Perspective, Slovenia*

Moderator:

Nadija Afanasieva, Ukrainian Institute for International Politics

❖ Concert by the Slovenian and Ukrainian Youth Orchestra

The first day of the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum closed with a concert of the 'Music for the Future' Chamber Ensemble⁴, led by conductor and art director Ms Živa Ploj Peršuh. The "Music for the Future" Orchestra was established during challenging times in March 2022 and unites young Ukrainian and Slovenian musicians in a story of a social project fuelled by the superpower of music.

Programme:

- J. S. Bach: Double Concerto featuring Tevž Kupljenik on oboe and Andraž Zorko on violin.
- J. S. Bach: Double Concerto with Anna and Sofiia Kysliak on violins.
- Žiga Pirnat: European anthem with Ukrainian text, sung by Marina Dolibets.
- Myroslav Skoryk: Melodija.

DAY 2: 25 October 2023

❖ Knowledge-driven society: a regional search for the competences and skills of future professions

The session emphasised the importance of adapting education and skills development to the challenges posed by artificial intelligence and digitalisation, recognising the symbiotic relationship between humans and machines, and incorporating these topics into organisational planning processes. The importance of adapting education systems to focus on skills, the need for a broad set of competences including adaptability and digital literacy, and the recognition of ongoing changes that need continuous learning and flexibility were highlighted. The importance of cooperation between businesses and education, addressing skills mismatches, preparing for job displacement due to technological advancements, and the need for lifelong learning strategies were stressed. The Danube Tech Valley Initiative projects was described, and efforts to reform education, to tackle brain drain, and to create hubs for pooling successful initiatives were highlighted. The need for collaborative and innovative approaches to bridge the gap between labour market demand and the supply of knowledge and skills was underlined. Creativity, continuous learning, sustainability, and interdisciplinary collaboration as well as the urgency of creating a more dynamic, innovative, and impactful ecosystem in Central and Eastern Europe, addressing challenges in education, financing, literacy, and promoting international collaboration were highlighted.

Panellists:

Katarína Cséfalvayová, Executive Lead of the Danube Tech Valley Initiative, Slovakia

Prof. Dr. Dieter Hertweck, Research Professor at Reutlingen University, Baden-Württemberg and former Leader of Work Group Digital Danube of PA 8 EUSDR, Germany

Mitja Jermol, UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies for Open Educational Resources and Open Learning at Jozef Stefan Institute, Slovenia

Viktor Nedović, Director, Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth, Entrepreneurship (SAIGE) Project, Serbia

Ildikó Pathóová, Director of the Lifelong Learning Unit at the Secondary Education and LLL Division, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, Slovakia

Duška Rakin and Tamara Živanović, 2022 POPRI award winners for "VeYo", Serbia

Moderator:

Prof. Dr. Zdravko Kačič, Rector, University of Maribor, Slovenia

⁴ <https://future.smo.ngo/>

❖ Danube Region Programme 2nd call for proposals

This session moderated by Danube Region Programme reunited on the panel the Danube Region Programme Joint Secretariat. The session focused on the upcoming 2nd call for proposals (open from 2 November 2023 until 29 March 2024) under the Danube Region Programme. Recommendations by the Project Officers on how to set up a successful transnational project were shared, including a discussion on what makes an ideal partnership for such a project. An overview of typical weak points of project applications submitted in the 1st call for proposals was given, such as: insufficient output descriptions, description of the durability and transferability of project outcomes, and missing linkage to the EUSDR. In this regard, it was highlighted that for applicants, firmly embedding the EUSDR into project proposals comes with great assets, as the EUSDR is an excellent tool to reach relevant stakeholders and can bring valuable support to each project implementation stage. Further, the support provided by the DRP to potential applicants was outlined, such as webinars held from September to November 2023, a matchmaking platform to find suitable partners, and individual consultations between applicants and the relevant DRP Project Officer (one consultation per project).

Panellists:

Simona Ene, Head of Danube Region Programme Joint Secretariat

Katalin Kovács-Kacza, Project Officer, Danube Region Programme

Natália Liholot, Project Officer, Danube Region Programme

Stephen Halligan, Project Officer, Danube Region Programme

Horst Schindler, Project Officer, Danube Region Programme

Johannes Gabriel, Project Officer, Danube Region Programme

Moderator:

Mirjana Vidanović, Danube Region Programme

❖ Mobility & Multimodality: The Impact of Large Projects for Improved Connectivity

The panel Mobility & Multimodality: The Impact of Large Projects for Improved Connectivity dealt with transport infrastructure as a key ingredient in the economic development while supporting personal well-being and economic growth in the Danube Region. Multimodal networks should therefore play a central role in the planning and expansion of efficient, safe, resilient and sustainable transport modes. In the panel, several large-scale infrastructure projects in the Danube Region were presented that contribute or will contribute to improved mobility, connectivity, accessibility and cohesion in Europe. It showed that the switch from road-based measures to investments in rail is central and is prioritised nationally. Cross-connections that are both multimodal and sustainable can already be found in the construction of bridges, railway lines, roads and tunnels in the Danube Region. The panellists further discussed together with the audience their implications related to environmental, economic and social issues. It was emphasised that the connections between the capital cities in the Danube Region should be improved and renewed.

Panellists:

Helmut Adelsberger, Consultant Engineer for Civil Engineering, InfraConceptA, Austria

Zoran Andrić, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Goran Legac, Project director, Hrvatske ceste d.o.o., Croatia

Kristjan Novak, Expert associate for EU funds, The Second railway line Koper-Divača, Ltd., Slovenia

Miodrag Poledica, Director of the Department for Strategy, Design and Development, Serbia

Moderator:

Franc Žepič, Coordinator of the Priority Area 1b, Secretary at the Ministry of Infrastructure of Slovenia

❖ Enhancing the hydrogen economy in the Danube Region

The session started with a comprehensive explanation on hydrogen, including introductions of the technology and the energy community. During the subsequent panel discussion, it became clear that hydrogen provides excellent opportunities for the EUSDR countries to move their energy systems further along the decarbonisation pathways. However, there are severe challenges for expanding the hydrogen economy, such as the high price and insufficient grants to support technology facilities, lack of targeted regulatory frameworks, lack of data or lack of political commitment. Also, uncertainty is an obstacle, as many actors recognise the need, but they are uncertain about the demand side (which sectors will need which amounts), whereas the demand side is uncertain how the infrastructure will develop. Good examples of pilot projects can be found in Baden-Württemberg with two green hydrogen model regions in Ulm and Stuttgart, in Slovenia, which is part of the cross-border North Adriatic Hydrogen Valley, in the University of Pécs (HU), with an education programme and a hydrogen infrastructure development project currently in the design phase, or in the Alpine Region, with a project on information exchange among different stakeholders. It was concluded that more transnational cooperation could facilitate the exchange of information and thus foster the development of the hydrogen economy in the Danube Region.

Keynote address:

Ádám Balogh, Senior Energy Infrastructure Expert, Energy Community

Panelists:

Julian Dörr, Researcher, Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering IAO, University of Stuttgart

Teodóra Diána Bakk, Chief Operating Officer, University of Pécs, National Laboratory for Renewable Energy, Hungary

Marko Babor, Executive Director for Development and Investments, Slovenian Power Plants Holding, Slovenia

Vlasta Krmelj, Director of Climate and Energy Agency of Podravje, AMETHyST project partner, Slovenia

Moderator:

Annamária Nádor, EUSDR Priority Area Coordinator 2 - "Sustainable Energy"

❖ Entering the decade of future - current and forthcoming water challenges

The session provided an overview on the challenges and achievements in managing the Danube River Basin. The importance of transboundary cooperation and stakeholder involvement to address challenges such as pollution, hydro-morphological alterations, and climate change was highlighted. Achievements in improving wastewater treatment, reducing emissions, and addressing ecological issues were presented and the commitment for cooperation, transparency, and stakeholder involvement in addressing future challenges in the Danube River Basin was expressed. Information regarding the European Drought Observatory's work on drought management, risk assessment was provided, and was announced the newly published European Drought Risk Atlas and the *Development of a Harmonised Water Balance Modelling System for Danube River Basin* project was introduced. The challenges and importance of addressing migratory fish in the Danube River Basin were described focusing on the decrease in migratory freshwater fish species as well as on the impact of human activities and climate change on migratory fish. The global nature of plastic pollution was presented and the need for continued efforts and partnerships to address the issue in trans-carpathia and beyond was highlighted. The panel ended with discussions on water-related challenges and perspectives on the most pressing issues such as bombing of the Danube harbours, implementing adaptation measures. The need for collaboration, sharing ideas, and finding synergies to move forward in an integrated way was stressed.

Panellists:

Birgit Vogel, Executive Secretary, International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, Austria

Prof. Dr. Chari Tjaša Giessler Bulc, Regional Chair, Global Water Partnership CEE – Nature Based Solutions, Slovenia

Dario Masante, Joint Research Centre of European Commission, Disaster Risk Management Unit E.1 – European Drought Observatory for Resilience and Adaptation

Márton Pesel, Priority Area Coordinator Hungary, EU Strategy for the Danube Region PA 4 “Water Quality” - Danube Water balance, Hungary

Kálmán Szanyi, Project Manager, For the Nature and Environmental Protection – PAPILIO, Ukraine

Danka Thalmeinerová, Priority Area Coordinator Slovakia, EU Strategy for the Danube Region PA 4 “Water Quality” – Climate and migratory fish, Slovakia

Moderator:

Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper, EUSDR Priority Area Coordinator 4 - " Water Quality", Hungary

❖ **Strategic planning and budgeting – Funding through and beyond IPA III/NDICI in the Danube Region**

In the panel dealing with strategic planning and budgeting the panellists reported that when embedding the relevant topics, they are first prioritised in national strategies, which are then transferred to the IPA/NDICI framework and its requirements in a second step. Central to this is, for example, the development of regional development strategies in line with national priorities, using EU funds to finance these key priorities in order to generate added value. However, it should be noted that the establishment of funds is decided by DG NEAR in Brussels, which means that the specialised DGs should be better involved and the countries concerned should be included in setting the framework. Another challenge for national budget planning and compliance with the EU framework is embedding the accession process in the EU. Here, the IPA framework helped to identify gaps in the national programmes and was used to anchor the EUSDR objectives in this respect. Macro-regional strategies help to share and discuss experiences and provide a larger base of stakeholders at all levels. The cross-border programmes, on the other hand, help citizens to understand the benefits of cooperation.

Keynote address:

Besiana Ninka, Interact Programme

Panellists:

Sanda Šimić Stambolić, Acting Assistant Minister, Ministry of European Integration, National IPA Coordination, Republic of Serbia

Bojan Vujović, Director General for EU Funds in the Ministry of European Affairs and National Coordinator for the EUSDR, Montenegro

Rostyslav Tomenchuk, Director of Department for International Technical Assistance Coordination, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers, Ukraine

Zara Halilović, Assistant Director, Directorate for European Integration, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Moderator:

Andreja Jerina, former National Coordinator for EUSDR, EUSAIR and EUSALP, Slovenia

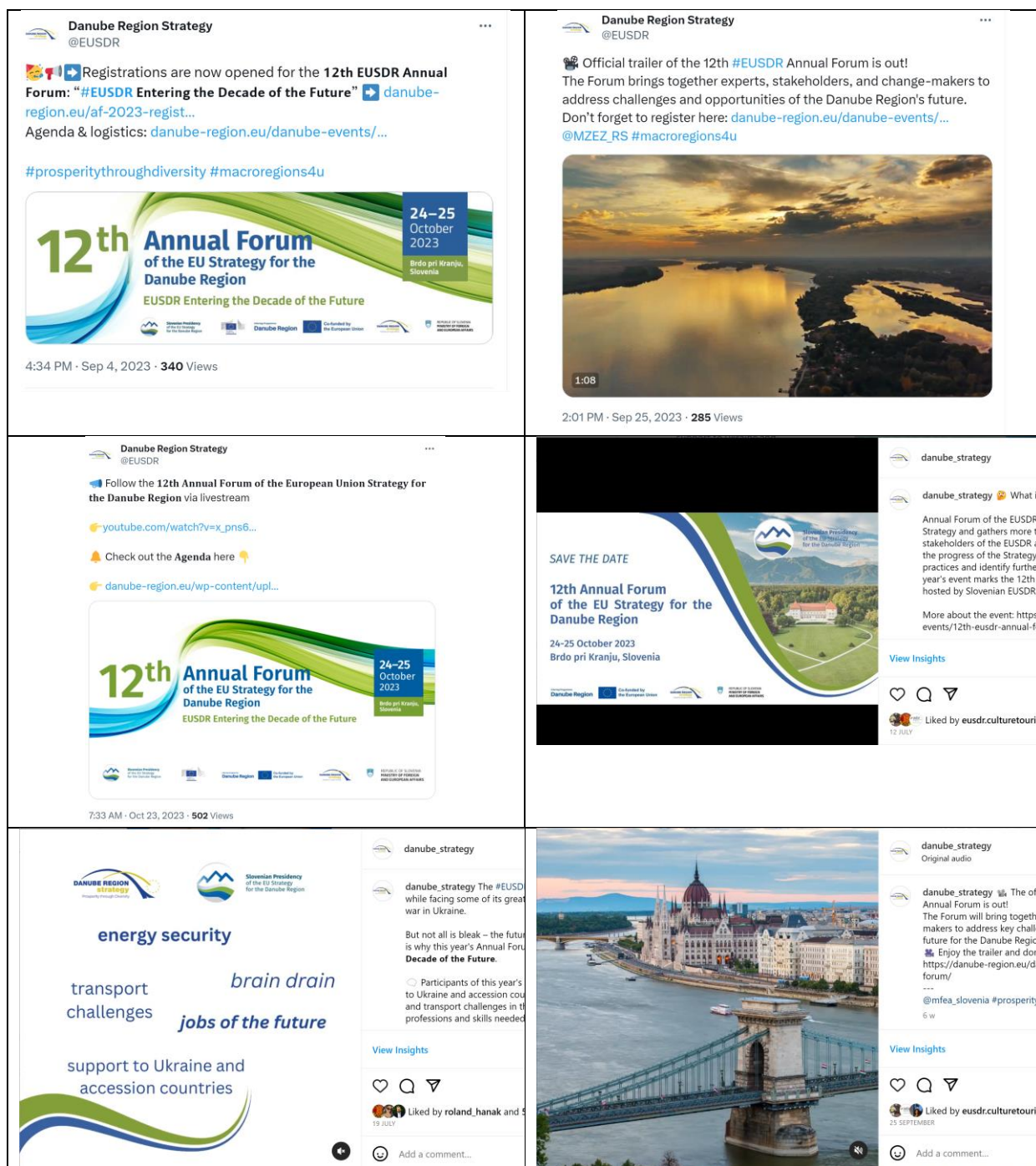
❖ **Closing of the 12th Annual Forum 2023**

The 12th EUSDR Annual Forum was closed by the moderators of the event, Igor E. Bergant and Bernarda Žarn.

❖ Media coverage of the event

The 12th edition of the EUSDR Annual Forum was also reflected in the social media, on the EUSDR platforms managed by the Danube Strategy Point: Facebook, LinkedIn, X and Instagram. These platforms were updated with information in three phases of the Forum: before, during and post-event.

Considering the online communities on each channel, the most visible in reaching a significant number of views are LinkedIn and Facebook. The reach for selected posts is illustrated in the following captures.




<p>Danube Region Strategy • You EUSDR 4mo • Edited •</p> <p>🔔 Save the date 🔔 for the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum - EUSDR Entering the Decade of the Future, jointly organised by the Republic of Slovenia, the European Commission and the Interreg Danube Region ...see more</p> <p>SAVE THE DATE</p> <p>12th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region</p> <p>24-25 October 2023 Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia</p> <p>29 4 reposts</p> <p>Like Comment Repost Send</p> <p>898 impressions View analytics</p>	<p>Danube Region Strategy • You EUSDR 4mo •</p> <p>EUSDR PA 10 🔔 SAVE THE DATE: 10th Danube Participation Day, 23 Oct 2023, venue: Department of Political Science, at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. ...see more</p> <p>10th Danube Participation Day - PA 10</p> <p>capacitycooperation.danube-region.eu • 2 min read</p> <p>31 2 reposts</p> <p>Like Comment Repost Send</p> <p>1,091 impressions View analytics</p>
<p>Danube Region Strategy • You EUSDR 1mo •</p> <p>🎬 The official trailer of the 12th #EUSDR Annual Forum is out! The Forum will bring together experts, stakeholders, and change-makers to address key challenges and opportunities for a better future for ...see more</p> <p>12th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region EUSDR Entering the Decade of the Future</p> <p>Jakob Weiss and 15 others 1 comment • 3 reposts</p> <p>Like Comment Repost Send</p> <p>863 impressions View analytics</p>	<p>Danube Region Strategy • You EUSDR 1mo •</p> <p>📅 2 more days to register and get ready for the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum under SI #EUSDR PCY! Join us on 24-25 October at the picturesque Brdo pri Kranju, SI - ...see more</p> <p>Jakob Weiss and 19 others 2 reposts</p> <p>Like Comment Repost Send</p> <p>717 impressions View analytics</p>
<p>Danube Region Strategy 12 July •</p> <p>🔔 What is the #EUSDR Annual Forum? Annual Forum of the EUSDR is the biggest political event of the Strategy and gathers more than 300 participants. It offers various stakeholders of the EUSDR an opportunity to meet and discuss the progress of the Strategy's implementation, exchange best practices and identify further opportunities for cooperation. This year's event marks the 12th edition of the Forum and will be hosted by Slovenian E... See more</p> <p>SAVE THE DATE</p> <p>12th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region</p> <p>24-25 October 2023 Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia</p> <p>DANUBE-REGION.EU 12th EUSDR Annual Forum: "EUSDR Entering the Decade of the Future" Please Save the date f...</p> <p>Post impressions: 148, post reach: 134, Engagement 13</p>	<p>Danube Region Strategy 7 September •</p> <p>Do you plan to go to EUSDR Annual Forum, on 24-25 October, in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia)? Then visit one place and enjoy two events! 📅</p> <p>Do you have a great idea for your next project? Or would you like to network and meet new potential collaboration partners from the Danube region and beyond? Then, C2Lab is the right place for you!</p> <p>Registration is open 📅 for this interactive workshop taking place on 25 - 26 Oct! M... See more</p> <p>EUROPEAN CLUSTER COLLABORATION PLATFORM</p> <p>CLUSTERCOLLABORATION.EU C2Lab - Ljubljana/Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia European Cluster Collaboration Platform</p> <p>Post impressions: 403, post reach: 386, Engagement 17</p>



Danube Region Strategy
@EUSDR

25 September

The official trailer of the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum is out! The Forum will bring together experts, stakeholders, and change-makers to address key challenges and opportunities for a better future for the Danube Region. Enjoy the trailer and don't forget to register here: <https://danube-region.eu/danube-/12th-eusdr-annual-forum/> #prosperitythroughdiversity #macroregions4u #danubeyouthcouncil Danube Region Programme @mfea_slovenia



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Boost post

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Danube Region Strategy
@EUSDR

#EUSDR Annual Forum: During the panel on Rethinking the Danube's Potential with Emerging Voices, members of the Danube Youth Council expressed their viewpoints on #braindrain in the Danube Region. Money is not all! @MZEZ_RS #danubeyouthcouncil #prosperitythroughdiversity



11:51 AM · Oct 24, 2023 · 185 Views

Danube Region Strategy
@EUSDR

The #EUSDR 12th Annual Forum official opening hosts ministers from the Danube Region countries @MZEZ_RS @EU_Commission #danubeyouthcouncil #prosperitythroughdiversity #macroregions4u



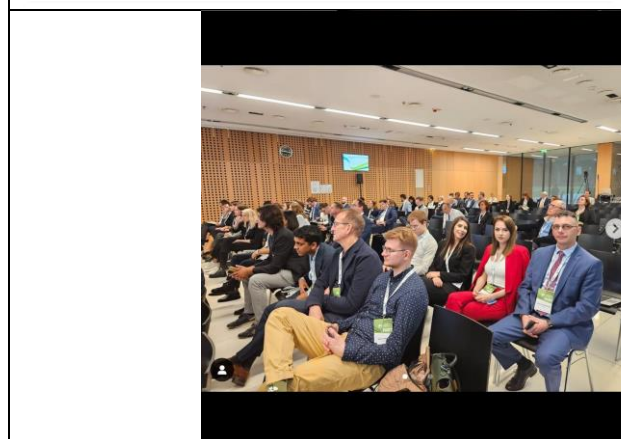
3:00 PM · Oct 24, 2023 · 393 Views

Danube Region Strategy
@EUSDR

Commissioner Elisa Ferreira, at the opening of the #EUSDR 12th Annual Forum #danubeyouthcouncil #prosperitythroughdiversity #macroregions4u youtu.be/PWnUtqr_qIY



3:55 PM · Oct 24, 2023 · 105 Views



danube_strategy
Brdo pri Kranju

danube_strategy After two days of brainstorming about the brain drain, the conclusions were presented today, at the Annual Forum in Brdo pri Kranju.

By far, we all agreed that money is not always the problem, but sometimes young people choose to study abroad for more opportunities and better conditions and connections.

We are not only the citizens of one country but the citizens of the world!

#DYC #AnnualForum #EUcitizens #slovenianpresidency

View Insights

Boost Post

Liked by arwonga_dan and 41 others

24 OCTOBER

Add a comment...



danube_strategy

danube_strategy Listen a nice concert at your 5 o'clock tea/coffee: <https://www.youtube.com/live/1iV0ti1yyw?si=jbsje1ZlamXXqBh>

The special concert of the 'Music for the Future' Chamber Ensemble, led by conductor and art director Ms Zva Ploj Peršuh, was organised within the 12th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

The "Music for the Future" Orchestra was established during challenging times in March 2022 and under young Slovenian and

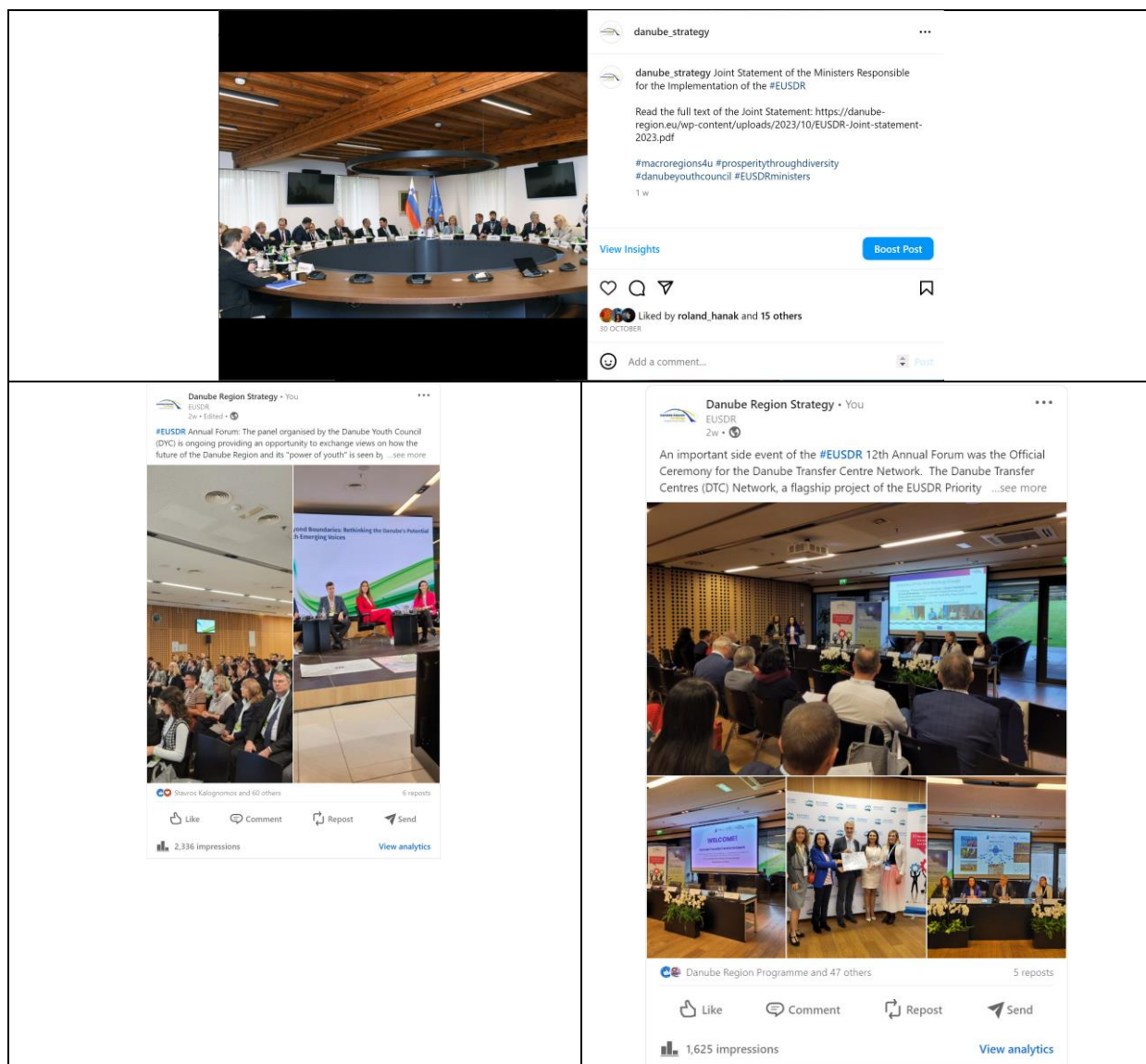
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The EUSDR website⁵ also recorded an increased number of visitors for the following posts:

Event section:

12th EUSDR Annual Forum⁶: "EUSDR Entering the Decade of the Future" – article including agenda, logistic details, time and place of the event reached 350 visitors during the Annual Forum.



⁵ www.danube-region.eu

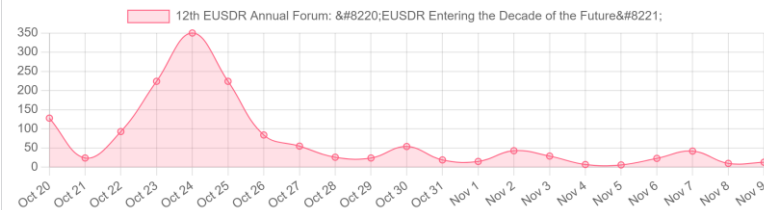
⁶ <https://danube-region.eu/danube-events/12th-eusdr-annual-forum/>

12th EUSDR Annual Forum: "EUSDR Entering the Decade of the Future"

Permalink: <https://danube-region.eu/danube-events/12th-eusdr-annual-forum/> Edit

Classic Mode Frontend Editor

Hit Statistics



The Article on the Joint Statement of the Ministers Responsible for the Implementation of the EUSDR published on the EUSDR website after the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum, was read by almost 40 visitors in one day, the visitors having a longer activity on this article in the following days after publication (30 October until 7 November 2023).



SIDE EVENTS

❖ 2nd Danube Youth Camp (21 October 2023)

During a reflection workshop held in Šempeter pri Gorici, Slovenia on Saturday, 21 October 2023, the first-generation Danube Youth Council (DYC) members looked back on their DYC mandate, jointly reflected on their experiences, challenges and lessons learnt, discussed the future developments of the DYC and formulated next steps for its future work, moving from the one-year Pilot Action to a long-term implementation format.

❖ POPRI Start-up Challenge: From talents to the Danube Region's strengths (22-23 October 2023)

The POPRI Start-up challenge is an event using a capacity building method for enhancing entrepreneurial and leadership skills that has already been carried out with more than 3.800 young participants from different European countries and macro-regional strategies. Just before the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum, this challenge was organised on 22-23 October 2023 in Primorski tehnološki park / Primorska Technology Park in Šempeter pri Gorici, Slovenia. This time, it brought together the members of the Danube Youth Council (DYC) and selected young participants from the other three macro-regional strategies (EUSALP, EUSAIR and EUSBSR). The challenge they were presented with was how to tackle brain drain in the Danube Region and make it attractive for young talents to develop their potential in their own countries. On two intensive days, the young participants worked on this challenge in small teams. The challenge led to the elaboration of concrete ideas and recommendations, which were then presented in the panel "Beyond Boundaries: Rethinking the Danube's Potential with Emerging Voices" on the first day of the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum.

❖ 10th Danube Participation Day (23 October 2023)

The 10th edition of the Danube Participation Day (DPD)⁷ was organised on 23 October 2023 back to back with the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum in a hybrid format in Ljubljana, Slovenia and online. This year's Danube Participation Day under the motto 'Ukraine's recovery towards EU membership' aimed to answer the question: How can the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) strengthen civil society and local actors for a sustainable recovery towards EU membership and what can we learn from/for Moldova? Several panel discussions showed that there is great support from Danube Region countries that previously joined the EU and stakeholders from NGOs, EUSDR and regional administration who shared their experiences and visions to a participatory recovery. In the discussions, it became clear that synergies should be further explored, and that the EUSDR could play a crucial role in making the linkages between all levels and already existing examples at municipal level and the policy uptake of good practice examples. The panel discussions were followed by interactive workshop sessions to discuss the questions raised in the panels.

❖ Danube Transfer Centre Network Ceremony – Strengthening regional transformation by boosting the competitiveness of the enterprises and turning the knowledge into value for regions, economy and society (24 October 2023)

The Danube Transfer Centre Network Ceremony took place on 24 October 2023 as a side event of the 12th EUSDR Annual Forum. The Danube Transfer Centres (DTC) Network⁸, a newly nominated Danube Strategy Flagship project of the EUSDR Priority Area 8 "Competitiveness" (PA 8) contributes to enhanced networking and capacity building within the Danube macro-region in the field of innovation and technology transfer. During the ceremony the Danube Strategy Flagship certificate was handed over from the Danube Strategy Point and EUSDR PA 8 to the Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum as facilitator of the DTC Network. During the Official Ceremony of the DTC Network, the introduction of new members to the DTC Network and the reinforcement of existing alliances was further celebrated. The network contributes also to the development and unity of the Danube Region and generating a transnational added value, through the initiation and implementation of various projects.

❖ C2Lab – Kick-start your next project (25-26 October 2023)

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP), with the support of the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, organised the 'kick-start your next project' workshop to network, meet new people, mature your project idea, and build the business case within the Cluster Collaboration Labs framework in on 25-26 October 2023. The focus of this lab was on transport, energy, Ukraine, skills, and networks in the Danube Region and aimed at organisations, companies, research organisations, actors from the civil society, and other interested entities. Before and during the lab, the participants teamed up and developed together their project idea and business case for innovative solutions for the Danube Region. After the workshop, the ECCP team will follow-up and give support in the further development of the projects, for example, looking into suitable financing sources.

⁷ <https://danubestrategy.eu/events/10th-danube-participation-day>

⁸ <http://www.dtcnetwork.eu/>

ATTACHMENT

Joint Statement of the Ministers Responsible for the Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

Brdo pri Kranju, 24 October 2023

We, the Ministers responsible for the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (hereinafter referred to as "EUSDR"), gathered on 24 October 2023 on the occasion of the 12th Annual Forum of the EUSDR jointly organised by the Republic of Slovenia, the European Commission and the Danube Region Programme with the support of the Danube Strategy Point:

Acknowledge that the Danube macro-region in the second decade of its existence faces some of the most significant challenges, in the field of energy, economic situation, health (caused by the COVID-19 pandemic) and the continuation of Russia's unprovoked military invasion of Ukraine.

Condemn in the strongest terms the continuation of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. **Express** full solidarity with the people of Ukraine, **reiterate** full support for the country's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognised borders, including territorial waters, and **encourage** all EUSDR stakeholders to make use of the structures offered by the EUSDR in supporting Ukraine now and in contributing to its reconstruction.

Consider Russia's repeated military strikes on Danube port infrastructure, grain storage facilities and surrounding areas as undermining global food security by posing a significant threat to the freedom of navigation on the Danube as well as an environmental threat to the Danube ecosystem on both sides of the river. **Encourage** discussion of possible ways to effectively counteract obstruction of free trade navigation.

Express solidarity with the people in the regions severely affected by natural disasters this summer. Their homes were devastated, as was public infrastructure and agricultural land. **Reconfirm** the importance of the macro-regional and EU cooperation on preparedness and response to natural disasters and reconstruction. **Encourage the** enhanced cooperation of officials and volunteer organisations within the EUSDR.

Welcome the EU candidate status granted to Ukraine, Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina, herewith making all countries participating in the EUSDR now either member states of the EU or accession candidates. **Recognise** the renewed momentum of the EU enlargement process and **confirm** full commitment of all candidate countries participating in the EUSDR to their EU membership perspective. **Encourage** participating countries and regions to explore all cooperation and capacity-building networks within the EUSDR to contribute to accelerated EU accession process and **invite** all EUSDR core stakeholders to make best use of multi-stakeholder engagement, connecting local, regional and national levels in this process.

Confirm our commitment to cooperation within the framework of the EUSDR to overcome existing and new challenges in the Danube Region and **emphasise** the importance of sustainable regional development, creating synergies between macro-regional strategies and the EU Cohesion Policy. In this context, **welcome** the initiative of the Slovenian EUSDR Presidency on empowering cooperation of all EUSDR stakeholders in the fields of visibility, stakeholder involvement and funding for implementation.

Recognise the key roles of the EUSDR National Coordinators as core strategic decision-makers in the EUSDR and of the EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators and the Steering Group members as key facilitators in the implementation and promotion of the Strategy. **Encourage** empowered engagement of stakeholders in the EUSDR Priority Areas and **reaffirm** the indispensable role of the Danube Strategy Point as the Strategy's secretariat, contributing to institutional memory, continuity and efficient implementation of the EUSDR. **Emphasise** the role of the European Commission as a key strategic coordination partner of the EUSDR and call on the Commission to strengthen the involvement of all its relevant services in the core governance of the EUSDR. **Encourage** future EUSDR TRIO Presidencies to actively pursue synergies and cooperation with other EU macro-regional strategies.

Appreciate the establishment and efforts of the first Danube Youth Council (DYC) and **look forward** to its further active involvement in the Strategy. **Recognise** valuable contributions of DYC members to the implementation of the objectives of EUSDR Priority Areas as well as to the EUSDR Presidency's priorities. **Call** for the continuation of an ambitious DYC working programme and for continued capacity-building support and guidance provided by the Danube Strategy Point, and by applying the POPRI method, a capacity building tool enhancing leadership and entrepreneurial skills of young people. **Recognise** the need to explore solutions addressing local and regional talent retention and development.

Welcome the initiative of exploring possible policy measures, actively supported by regional and national stakeholders such as the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) and the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) in the field of knowledge excellence, which are pioneering European legal forms of cooperation designed to facilitate and enhance cross-border activities across the European Union. These policy measures need to be harmonised and implemented in the next decades to ensure a socially and economically sustainable and knowledge-driven, competitive society. Based on the outcomes of EC Strategic Foresight, **recognise** the need for more digital, sustainable, personal, social and civic skills and competencies in the Danube Region. **Support** the development of methods and processes of strategic foresight, based on global and EU data, taking into account the needs of the Danube Region. Furthermore, **invite** policymakers and stakeholders to take into account, as much as possible, recommendations made by the DYC concerning talent retention and development in the Danube Region. Also, **take into account** the recommendations of the Danube Rectors' Conference (DRC) based on DRC Strategic Foresight and DRC Initiative Fund projects.

Take note of the profound changes resulting from rapid development of artificial intelligence and **recognise** the need for its regulation without hampering innovation to serve the societies and economies in the Danube Region on their path to sustainable development. **Encourage** strengthening synergies and exchanges between different

policymakers and stakeholders to improve cooperation on science, technology and innovation (STI) and education and training cooperation between countries and regions, to establish new Skills Academies, European Universities alliances and Innovation valleys/hubs. **Strengthen** the Danube Region to become the perspective region for quality of study and research for young talents, by enabling the knowledge providers to open their programmes and infrastructure in line with the principles of the Open Access policy and joint research and studies from and to the Danube Region.

Recognise the need to accelerate the green energy transition while ensuring the security of energy supply and support the efforts of the EUSDR in searching for synergies and more intense exchange of best practices among the countries of the Danube Region in deploying clean energy technologies. **Continue** to promote the diversification of energy supply sources and thereby contribute to reducing the dependence on Russian fossil fuels.

Highlight the significance of implementing the European Green Deal in the fight against climate change and environmental degradation and its alignment with the EUSDR's priorities in securing water quality, prevent environmental risks and safeguard biodiversity, protect natural landscapes and secure air and soil quality in the Danube Region. **Emphasise**, in the context of the European Green Deal, the importance of reduced bureaucracy and simplified procedures for its implementation.

Reaffirm the important role of transport in the economic, social and sustainable development in the Danube Region as well as the necessity of investment in the development and improvement of transport infrastructure in the Danube Region. Therefore, **call** upon all interested parties of the EUSDR to strengthen mutual infrastructure connections, develop new logistic routes and seek solutions on sustainable ways to close gaps and remove bottlenecks in the Danube Region transport network, including the support for mobility projects with macro-regional added value. In this regard, **emphasise** the focus on joint activities that promote smart transport infrastructure and services in order to improve their attractiveness and competitiveness by using the latest available technologies and, at the same time, **promote** sustainable modes of transport that support the common goals of climate and environmental protection. Furthermore, **encourage** enhancing the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes and support the improvement of connections to the Western Balkan region bringing them closer to the EU (Green Lanes).

Take note of the thorough process of aligning the EUSDR priorities with EU, national and regional funds, which is also known as "embedding", and the possibilities provided by embedding the EUSDR in relevant cohesion policy programmes as well as IPA / NDICI funds. **Acknowledge** the support of the Danube Region Programme in the implementation of the EUSDR and appreciate the decision to consider the entire territory of Ukraine as eligible in the Calls for Proposals. **Highlight** the importance of the networks of managing and programming authorities active in the EUSDR as efficient tools enabling intensified communication and coordination in the field of EUSDR implementation. Furthermore, **call** on the Commission and its services relevant for embedding activities, in particular DG REGIO and DG NEAR, to provide strong support in this process throughout the entire funding period, and to support the process of monitoring the embedding results.

Appreciate the regular organisation of the DARIF Joint Operations since 2013 to develop criminal and law enforcement cooperation along the Danube waterway and conferences



at the political level, namely the 3rd Danube Security Conference of Ministers of Interior of EUSDR countries, held at the Representation of the Free State of Bavaria in Brussels on 23–24 March 2023, and the conference “The Danube Region at the turn of times – actively shaping the transformation. Solution approaches for politics and business” on 10 July 2023 in Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg.

Encourage to continue organising ministerial meetings and other political events also on other EUSDR thematic areas at regional, national and EU levels to deepen the political ownership of the EUSDR and call for a revival of annual Danube Parliamentary Conferences as one of the main tools for enhancing the political commitment and visibility of the EUSDR.

In conclusion we, the Ministers of the EUSDR, **appreciate** the work done so far and the efforts made by the stakeholders at a time when the EUSDR has entered its second decade of existence. We **confirm** our political engagement and will continue to rally our efforts to strengthen cooperation within the EUSDR, as well as to provide political guidelines for further development of the Strategy, unlocking the full potential of the Danube Region.

Finally, we **entrust** the EUSDR Presidency 2024 to Austria and wish it every success in chairing the Strategy.