

Proposal
for the establishment of the
EUSDR
Danube Youth Council (DYC)
&
Danube Youth Organisations
Network (DYON)



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1. Youth participation in Europe

Young people between 15 and 29 years made up 17% of the European Union (EU) population in 2018. In the Danube Region young people between 18 and 35 years made up 2019 some estimated 26 million, making the youth ratio with almost 23,5% slightly higher than the EU average.

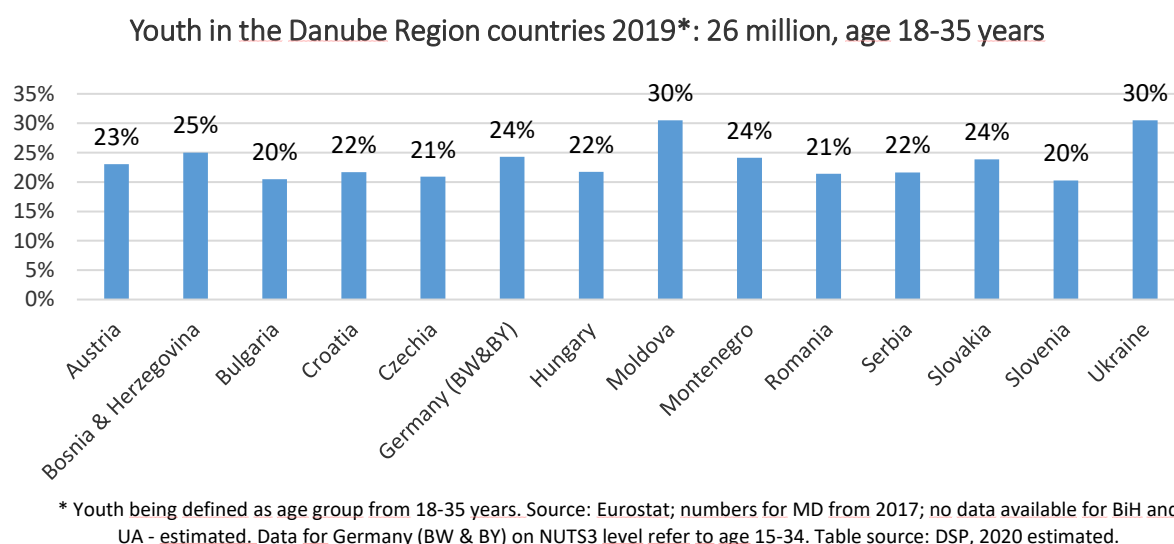


Figure 1: Youth in the Danube Region countries 2019*: 26 million, age 18-35 years
(Source: DSP illustration based on Eurostat)

Similar to the concept of EU macro-regional strategies (MRS), created to tackle common challenges, young people in the Danube Region face comparable problems in education and training, on the job market and as regards living conditions, etc., irrespective of their gender, the economic situation, social origin or age.

Moreover, the young generation faces the same global challenges as all other EU and MRS citizens: climate change, sustainable development, digitalisation, challenging labour market developments, the Covid-19 pandemic etc.

1.1. Youth Policies in the European Union

The involvement of present and future generations in the shaping of our societies, as well as the question of how to do it, is high on the political agenda on a local, regional, national and European level. Since 2010, the EU has developed and implemented its own Youth Strategy; in 2016, EU Leaders endorsed the need for action in support of youth in the Bratislava roadmap.¹ Since then, various EU policies aimed at giving leverage to young people in Europe.

¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21250/160916-bratislava-declaration-and-roadmapen16.pdf>

EU Youth Strategy

The EU Youth Strategy was confirmed in 2019 (Council Resolution of 26th November 2018 as the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027)² and puts a strong accent on youth participation and empowerment. It “fosters youth participation in democratic life; it also supports social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society”, focusing on three core areas of action: Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people³ alongside 11 goals that range from equality to inclusiveness and from sustainable development to education and employment.⁴

Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all EU member states to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 have access to a good quality employment, education, apprenticeship and/or traineeship within four months of unemployment or leaving education. The Youth Guarantee has been reinforced in a Council Recommendation of October 2020.⁵

Manifesto for young people by young people to shape the European cooperation policy

The “Youth Manifesto” presents young people’s ideas on Interreg and especially on how to align the programmes with their expectations. It is mainly addressed to policy makers at EU, national, regional and local level as well as to Interreg Managing Authorities and project beneficiaries, organisations interested in EU cohesion – and especially Interreg - policy making, youth, citizens’ engagement and democratic participation. The manifesto was drafted by the European Commission/DG REGIO based on a comprehensive consultation process with young people all over Europe.⁶ The Manifesto was presented to high-level decision makers on 15 October 2020 including 12 recommendations for better youth involvement and among others expressing the necessity to streamline #NextGenerationEU with young people’s needs.

Eastern Partnership & Youth

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) addresses education and youth employment in its “20 Deliverables by 2020” policy priorities. In doing so, the Eastern Partnership process developed a Youth and Education Package that aims at strengthening investments in young people’s skills, entrepreneurship and employability. Based on the results of this policy, investment in youth will stay in the focus of the EaP beyond 2020. Currently, the countries of the Eastern Partnership are working on the EU4Youth – Youth Engagement Roadmaps⁷. The project supports national youth policies that stimulate young people’s engagement with local stakeholders, public experts and EU representatives.

² [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42018Y1218\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42018Y1218(01)&from=EN)

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2018:0269:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁴ https://europa.eu/youth/strategy/european-youth-goals_en

⁵ Youth Guarantee: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en> (last accessed 20 May 2021)

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/youth_manifesto_interreg_en.pdf

⁷ <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/stay-informed/projects/eu4youth-youth-engagement-roadmaps>

European Year of Youth

2022 is the European Year of Youth, shining a light on the importance of European youth to build a better future – greener, more inclusive and digital. With opportunities for young people to learn, share their vision, meet people and engage in activities all over Europe, the European Year of Youth aims at building confidence and hope in a post-pandemic perspective.

1.2. Youth Participation in Macro-Regional Strategies

The EU Youth Strategy has been followed up with specific initiatives by a score of European institutions, from the Council of Europe, the Council of Regions, the European Parliament as well as the European macro-regions: “Initiatives such as the EUSALP Youth Council as well as further endeavour to involve youth in the macro-regional decision-making processes in the Baltic Sea Region, Adriatic-Ionian Region, and in the Danube Region are proof that there is a common understanding of the role of youth to build inclusive long-term development strategies.”⁸

In 2018, the EUSALP launched a process addressing youth participation under the motto "youth.shaping.EUSALP". One of the outcomes of this initiative is the EUSALP Youth Council⁹ that provides a platform for institutional involvement of young people in all EUSALP bodies to make sure that their ideas and viewpoints are heard and considered.

Likewise, the EUSBSR, the EUSAIR and the EUSDR are currently exploring options to involve young people into macro-regional strategies. Also, during the 2nd EU MRS WEEK (1-5 March 2021), organised by the EC, a clear focus was put on the increase of youth involvement in all four MRS and on how to bring in new ideas from young people for the macro-regions.¹⁰

2. Youth Policies and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

The revised EUSDR Action Plan addresses the strategic objective: “Enhancing Democracy, sound Administration and strong Involvement of Civil Society and Youth”.¹¹ In doing so, the EUSDR acknowledges the role of young people in enhancing quality of life in the Danube Region and makes it a priority for the implementation of the EUSDR in the coming years.

This position has been further reinforced in the Joint Statement of the Ministers responsible for the implementation of the EUSDR at the Annual Forum in Zagreb 2020 as well as in the Joint Statement of Ministers responsible for Innovation and Digitalisation of the participating countries of the EUSDR in Bratislava in 2021, agreeing to “take further steps to strengthen the support and widen the stakeholder platform, which includes a broad spectrum of actors, in particular better participation and involvement of the younger generation in the Danube

⁸ <https://capacitycooperation.danube-region.eu/2021/02/guidance-paper-for-youth-participation-is-endorsed/>

⁹ <https://eusalp-youth.eu/>

¹⁰ <https://eumrsweek.app.swapcard.com/event/2nd-eu-macro-regional-strategies-week>

¹¹ <https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/EUSDR-ACTION-PLAN-SWD202059-final-1.pdf>

Region”¹² and welcoming “new formats of involvement of the Danube youth in the EUSDR and call upon all interested stakeholders to undertake the necessary steps in reaching this goal”¹³.

So far, the role of young people has been reflected in the numerous networks and projects of and for young people to promote cooperation and active citizenship in the region. In addition, several initiatives are more directly linked to the Danube Region Strategy or were initiated by several EUSDR stakeholder groups:

- **Guidance Paper for Youth Participation**

Overall, the Guidance Paper for Youth Participation¹⁴ aims at contributing to involve young people and youth organisations in the EU Danube Region Strategy. Thereby, the paper addresses two purposes: **1. Providing guidance to youth initiatives** and young people to pro-actively shape development in the Danube Region; **2. Starting a discussion in the EUSDR Governance and beyond** on a long-term sustainable perspective for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

Against this background, the paper defines major factors for successful youth participation. In the course of a multi-stage consultation process, stakeholders from the Danube Region identified needs and activities that are linked to the following factors to enhance youth participation: **1. Capacity building; 2. Communication; 3. Cooperation.**

For the sake of operationalisation, the Guidance Paper for Youth Participation provides a framework to structure and prioritise activities. In doing so, the framework should support stakeholders in the capitalisation on existing initiatives, detecting “blind spots” of youth participation, and generally develop activities to create a beneficial environment for youth participation.

The Guidance paper was developed in a two-year consultation process by Priority Area 10 in cooperation with the Danube Youth Participation Project, Danube Civil Society Forum, the Danube Youth Network, Agapedia Foundation, the State Ministry of Baden-Württemberg and was endorsed and published in February 2021.

- **Danube Youth Network (DYN)**

The DYN has been implementing transnational youth projects in the Danube Region since 2018 with NGOs from Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Baden-Württemberg, each with a long and specific experience in youth work and a track record of cooperation in the EUSDR. The development of the DYN was financed until 2021 by Baden-Württemberg, with the aim to implement a sustainable, open and self-organised Danube Youth Network (DYN), extending its transnational activities together with locally active youth organisations from all over the EUSDR.

DYN projects, financed by institutions, cities and organisations include amongst others exchange, learning and empowerment formats like “Youth and Cities”, participation in the

¹² <https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/EUSDR-Joint-Statement-of-Ministers-2020.pdf>

¹³ https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Joint-Statement-of-Ministers_EUSDR-Annual-Forum-2021_final_amended.pdf

¹⁴ https://capacitycooperation.danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/sites/3/2021/02/Guidance-Paper-Youth-Participation_Feb2021-LAYOUT.pdf

EUSDR Participation Days and Annual Fora, the transnational media project “Shoot by Youth” and the “Friends of the Danube” youth camps.¹⁵

The network has been actively and visibly representing the bottom-up and operational level of youth policies in the EUSDR, offering concrete opportunities for the implementation of ideas and projects developed by young people as well as enhancing knowledge about the EUSDR, Europe and European values. However, the meaningful, sustainable and long-term involvement of youth policies, youth organisations and young people in the EUSDR requires suitable framework conditions for participation.

The bottom-up approach of the youth network with its organisation based on a local, regional and on a transnational level can facilitate a closing of the gap between the transnational perspective of the EUSDR, on the one hand, and civil society, local actors and young people in the Danube Region, on the other hand, mainstreaming youth policies across the Danube Region and enhancing the Strategy’s visibility through multipliers and change makers at the local level. Furthermore, enhancing young people’s engagement and efforts beyond youth policies can be utilised towards mainstreaming of other policies (cohesion, EU enlargement, EU neighbourhood etc.). The cooperation of the DYN with the EUSDR has been successful in many fields and thematic foci. Also on the core-stakeholder level (e.g. via PA10) there have been a number of successful actions and projects that contributed to fruitful exchanges between the DYN and the EUSDR, which have shown that even closer and formalised way of cooperation would benefit and bring added value to both (e.g. the Danube Youth Salon held in October 2021). Therefore, integrating a bottom-up, self-governed youth structure in the EUSDR governance and decision-making processes is a good practice example for youth participation and inclusion.

- **Danube Region Youth Platform**

In 2014, EUSDR Priority Area 9 “People & Skills” together with the EU SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centers South East Europe, Eastern Europe and Caucasus and the Interkulturelles Zentrum as former Austrian National Agency for Erasmus+ launched the Danube Region Youth Platform (DRYP). It gathers stakeholders in the Danube Region from the formal and informal education sector to exchange information and explore opportunities for cross-sectoral cooperation, address challenges young people face related to their educational pathways and to foster social cohesion, social inclusion and employability in the region. The platform aims at facilitating project development in the framework of Erasmus+ and other EU funding programmes to foster partnerships at the interface of education (formal and non-formal), training and the EU youth objectives.¹⁶

- **Young Bled Strategic Forum – Young BSF**

For the past decade, the Young BSF has been bringing together young leaders, aged between 18 and 35 years, from all over the world to engage in lively discussion and develop innovative solutions to some of the most pressing global issues. EUSDR and lately also EUSAIR youth is a special focus group. Young BSF has become a unique meeting place

¹⁵ <https://socialngonetwork.eu/danube-youth-participation-2019-2021-danube-youth-network/>

¹⁶ <https://peopleandskills.danuberegion.eu/wpcontent/uploads/sites/11/sites/11/EUSDR-Youth-Platform>

for a diverse array of young leaders, entrepreneurs, influencers, thinkers and social activists, offering them a platform to share their visions, exchange ideas and connect.

Young people, often metaphorised as ‘our future’ (in a truthful or cliché manner), and their participation in society is crucial in creating resilient democracies and a sustainable global environment that can respond to the myriad contemporary and future global challenges. Engagement of young individuals does not only include political participation but a broader approach, ensuring the right, the means, space and opportunity to participate and take action towards building a better society, as underlined in the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. Although the possibilities for youth participation have increased, we can still do more to encourage greater engagement, connection and empowerment of young individuals in practice and contribute to the overall perception of the important role young people play in society.

2021 Young BSF will focus on the participation of young people in European affairs: it will offer an introduction to the opportunities for their engagement (on the EU level), listing the opportunities for their engagement, and describe the problems they face and the tools they lack for effective participation in society, ranging from education, access to the labour market, social affairs and the possibility to influence the decision-makers. Most importantly, the discussions taking place within the Young BSF will focus on how to address identified challenges and the solutions needed to guarantee that young Europeans truly are the future of Europe.

- Youth as Priority under the Slovak and Ukrainian EUSDR Presidencies

The 2021 EUSDR Presidency held by Slovakia put “Participation of Youth in the Strategy implementation” onto the agenda of its Presidency¹⁷ and made youth participation one of the key topics of the 10th EUSDR Annual Forum, which took place in October 2021 in Bratislava.

The current Ukrainian EUSDR Presidency continues the efforts in keeping the topic high on the agenda of the EUSDR. Among other priorities, it has committed its efforts to achieving positive change in the lives of young people. Next to the support of young people via the EUSDR, the Ukrainian EUSDR Presidency already in 2020/2021 adopted a new paradigm of state youth policy in Ukraine: from “work with youth” to “youth participation” covering the approval of the National Youth Strategy until 2030 and the adoption of the Law of Ukraine “On Basic Principles of Youth Policy”. The new state youth policy aims at conditions for self-realisation and development of youth potential in Ukraine, fostering independence and competitiveness and ensuring active participation of youth in social life.

Task Force Danube Youth Council (TF DYC)

To further elaborate concrete steps for a better involvement of youth into the EUSDR and its governance structure, the SK EUSDR Presidency initiated the Task Force Danube Youth Council (TF DYC) – a working group consisting of EUSDR Presidency, TRIO Presidency, interested EUSDR NCs, the DSP and EC. Additional expertise was provided during the SK EUSDR Presidency by relevant networks, institutions, PAs and NGOs, such as the Danube

¹⁷ <https://danube-region.eu/slovak-eusdr-presidency-announces-programme-for-2021/>

Youth Network, the Danube Civil Society Forum, Agapedia Foundation, the State Ministry of Baden-Württemberg and PA10.

The TF DYC was mandated by the EUSDR NCs to prepare and further elaborate this concept, for involvement of young people of the Danube Region into the governance of the EUSDR, and to revert back to the EUSDR Presidency, which was to initiate further consultation and a decision-making process among EUSDR NCs with the aim to present the concept at the Annual Forum in Bratislava in October 2021.

The following characteristics of the Danube Youth Council were subject to development and specification and are detailed in the upcoming chapters:

- Size of the Danube Youth Council
- Selection criteria for members
- Duration of membership in the Danube Youth Council
- Selection procedure for the Danube Youth Council
- Concrete scope of tasks
- Scope of participation in NC meetings, PAC meetings, meetings, committees and working groups at PA level
- Financing of DYC
- Further aspects might be explored in the course of the discussions of the TF DYC.

3. A Danube Youth Council & a Danube Youth Organisations' Network

Young people living in the Danube Region are active, responsible and critical-thinking citizens. If they are given access to information and decision-making processes, they can make a strong impact on and an invaluable contribution to the future of the Danube Region. Involving young people and youth organisations in the EU Danube Region Strategy requires, however, suitable framework conditions for meaningful participation on both sides. This is not only relevant for the implementation of the EU Danube Region Strategy “on the ground”, but also in interacting with Priority Areas, national EU Danube Region Strategy stakeholder platforms, funding programmes and other institutions and bodies within and outside the EUSDR.¹⁸

3.1 Purpose & benefits

The embedding of youth, youth organisations and initiatives from the Danube Region into the EUSDR governance aims at promoting the visibility of youth perspectives as well as the contribution of young people and youth organisations to the implementation of the Danube Region Strategy, by not only bringing in new perspectives, but also to provide the young generation with opportunities for real impact.

¹⁸ <https://capacitycooperation.danube-region.eu/2021/02/guidance-paper-for-youth-participation-is-endorsed/>

In doing so, the EUSDR governance gains better insights into the challenges of young people and can add a stronger long-term perspective to the actions of the Strategy. Furthermore, a youth council and a network of representatives of youth organisations have the potential to foster intergenerational cooperation and facilitate stakeholder mobilisation in the region.

Likewise, a more institutionalised cooperation with youth contributes to build leadership capacities among young people to engage in transnational dialogue and cooperation.

Hence, such step would present a win-win situation: Given the high potential for transnational cooperation offered by the EUSDR and by youth organisations and initiatives an institutionalised cooperation within the framework of the EUSDR would offer sustainable interregional and intergenerational exchange and cooperation.

Such institutionalised cooperation within the governance structures of the EUSDR can be realised via a “Youth Council”, the EUSALP Youth Council being a good practice example.¹⁹

Both the Danube Youth Council (DYC) and Danube Youth Organisations Network (DYON) can help to introduce youth perspectives into the Danube Region Strategy.

3.2. The Danube Youth Council (DYC)

The primary role of the Danube Youth Council (DYC) is to provide the core decision-making bodies in the Danube Region Strategy with advice and recommendations, to enable dynamic exchanges and learning processes.

DYC can play an important role in communication as well as providing fresh perspective on programmatic issues. Smaller groups without decision making powers, such as a council, focusing on fewer, specific topics, often facilitate an environment that is more conducive to productive communication and result-oriented cooperative strategies.

In doing so, the DYC can act as a non-partisan body that aims at contributing to improve capacity building, communication and cooperation for young people in the Danube Region.

To this end, the DYC needs to be integrated in the EUSDR governance in an advisory role, as a good practice example for youth participation and inclusion.

The DYC:

- Advises and recommends to the respective EUSDR-Presidency on all questions relating to youth and youth participation in the EUSDR and its member countries, helping by its opinions and proposals to ensure that youth policies are mainstreamed into the EUSDR governance and its member countries.
- Its representatives are actively involved on a thematically oriented basis at meetings of relevant decision-making bodies or meetings like the EUSDR Annual Forum or other EUSDR related events and thus

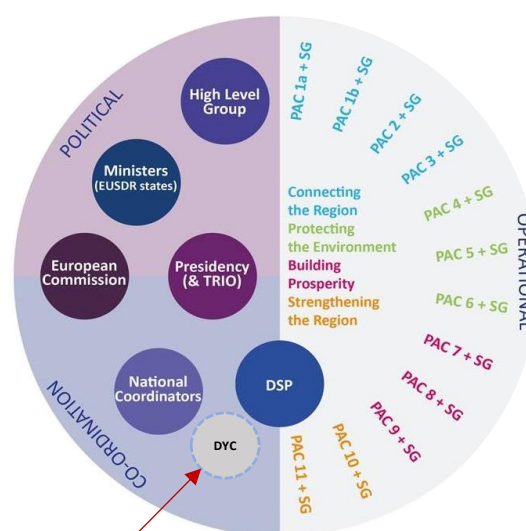


Figure 2: EUSDR Governance including the DYC (illustration by the DSP, 08/2020, amended in 08/2021)

¹⁹ <https://eusalp-youth.eu/eusalp-youth-council>

structurally contribute to the mainstreaming of youth policies in the EUSDR “.

3.2.1. The mission of the Danube Youth Council (DYC)

The DYC shall in its role as advisory body contribute to youth related issues within the EUSDR but also connect the youth perspective with EUSDR related thematic issues (on Priority Area levels where appropriate), by:

- Providing a discussion platform for exchange of expertise and advice in areas related to youth issues and policies;
- Helping and recommending how best to plan and implement the embedding of youth policies in the governance of the EUSDR;
- Promoting and interlinking trans-sectoral issues;
- Helping to raise support and funds for youth related projects in the EUSDR;
- Providing grass root information & opinion to EUSDR National Coordinators and/or Priority Area Coordinators in areas related to youth policies;
- Providing a youth focused link to cohesion, EU enlargement, EU neighbourhood and other EUSDR relevant policies on transnational, macro-regional, national, regional and local levels;
- Supporting visibility for EUSDR and its aims “on the ground”, gathering input from/serving as a liaison with other relevant institutions and organisation, providing feedback to the EUSDR governance bottom up;
- Connecting the EUSDR youth policies to EU /European organisations as well as other macro-regional strategies;

3.2.2. Proposal for Guidelines for the EUSDR DYC

Disclaimer: The following chapter outlines an initial proposal on the features of the Danube Youth Council. Specifications on the composition and tasks of the council and network are subject to further development following the decision of the EUSDR NCs.

I. Composition of the ‘Danube Youth Council’ (DYC) and Application Procedure

- The DYC is a non-partisan, macro-regional body, as the members do not formally represent the countries (apart from the fact that they are residents of the 14 EUSDR member states) or any organisations or networks but their generation in the Danube Region.
- The initiation of a DYC is endorsed by the National Coordinators of the EUSDR and supported by the Danube Strategy Point (DSP)²⁰.
- The Task Force Danube Youth Council (TF DYC) defined criteria for DYC membership selection and their involvement in EUSDR governance, which are to be endorsed by NCs.

²⁰ <https://danube-region.eu/contact/danube-strategy-point>

- NYC representative(s) have observer status with no voting right²¹ at EUSDR core-governance meetings.
- On the composition of the NYC, the NYC TF advises on two young residents (18-29 according to the definition of young people not being older than 29 years by Eurostat²²) per Danube Region country and on taking up the challenge of considering diversity criteria in the selection of two members per country. Eligible applicants are young people who are between 18 and 29 years old and are permanent residents of one of the EUSDR countries/regions. Any applicant not fulfilling the eligibility criteria will not be able to participate in the application process.
- In order to apply, young people must have a good understanding of English. Proficiency in English will be assessed through the answers given to open ended questions in the NYC Application Form. Applicants must further be ready to commit for the duration of the mandate to the EUSDR NYC, which is one year with the possibility to extend to two years (1+1). The applicants will be asked to commit for 1 year, the additional 1 year can be chosen on voluntary basis and is not binding. This commitment includes the participation in approximately three physical or virtual meetings per year, virtual exchanges, the elaboration of proposals and projects in small groups and the voluntary participation in events, institutional bodies and further youth activities.
- The application procedure will be organised by the DSP. The call shall be advertised across all of the 14 EUSDR participating states so as to ensure a synchronised and harmonised communication campaign. EUSDR NCs, PACs, SG members will be asked to disseminate the call within their national, transnational and thematic networks. The DSP will advertise the call via the EUSDR website, the existing social-media channels, the DSP newsletter and other communication tools. For the selection procedure a time span of three months is proposed by the TF NYC.
- The applicants will first need to pass the eligibility criteria check as described above. After fulfilling all eligibility criteria, the members of the NYC will be selected at random. In order to ensure diversity of members, attention in the application and selection process is paid to a balance of young people of different genders, different educational or professional backgrounds, considering applicants with and without experience in work in/with (youth) organisations or projects. The selected EUSDR NYC will include two members from each of the EUSDR states. Membership is non-transferable to other persons. The EUSDR Presidency and the NYC Task Force will be informed on the outcomes of the selection outcomes.
- All non-selected but eligible applicants will be placed on a list for future reference. Should the mandate of an active member finish or should members of the NYC cancel their mandate before the end of the first year, eligible applicants from the aforementioned list will be contacted and offered the mandate, based on the country/region of permanent residence of the outgoing NYC member. Also for these new NYC members diversity criteria

²¹ On the EUSDR Governance levels further parties with no voting rights are: the EC, the DSP, the Danube Region Programme. For further information on advisory functions and voting rights see: EUSDR Gov. Paper

^{21f} https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EUSDR_Governance_Paper_07-2020_endorsed.pdf, https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/EUSDR_PAC_RoPs_01-2019_final_adapted-09-2021.pdf

²² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_executive_summary#The_EU_is_growing_older_.E2.80.A6

shall be considered when offered the mandate. The new members will be given the full 1(+ 1 voluntary) year mandate. Should no potential members from the list accept to join the DYC, a new call for the respective EUSDR country will be opened. In this way calls will be opened on demand, providing maximum flexibility.

Inclusion in the list does not create any rights or obligations for any of the concerned parties. After a DYC member finishes a full 1+1 year mandate, their mandate expires automatically and a new call for the respective country will be opened.

- A mandate of 1+1 year for DYC members also allows enough time for capacity building, involvement and also taking into account the dynamics of the lives of young people. In individual cases, the mandate also expires when the person reaches 29 years of age, therefore applicants must not have reached their 28th birthday on the day of their application.

II. Tasks of the DYC

The DYC is created for the purpose of working with the different levels of the EUSDR governance and other institutions in the Danube Region and the European Union, giving advice and providing input on matters of EUSDR youth policies.

- DYC is involved in relevant decision-making processes and recommendations for future EUSDR priorities in an advisory capacity. Its representatives are actively involved on a thematically oriented basis at EUSDR governance meetings and events like the EUSDR Annual Forum, thus structurally contributing to the mainstreaming of youth policies in the EUSDR “on the ground” and serving the purpose of better aligning youth related activities within the Strategy and improving communication between national and thematic stakeholders.
- DYC provides advice to the incumbent EUSDR Presidency on all questions relating to youth and youth participation in the EUSDR and its member countries, helping with its opinions and proposals to ensure that youth policies are mainstreamed into the EUSDR governance and its member states.
- The DYC will meet at least three times a year, discuss and address topics for all relevant meetings of the EUSDR and prepare the EUSDR Youth Event as a part of the EUSDR Annual Forum. Resulting recommendations, reports and other material will be submitted in written to relevant EUSDR bodies via the DSP, which functions as facilitator.
- The DYC will elaborate Rules of Procedure to secure smooth cooperation with the EUSDR core stakeholders (NCs and PACs) and the DYON. These Rules of Procedure will include guidelines on DYC communication channels and rules on the participation of DYC representatives in EUSDR core stakeholder meetings (e.g. rotational principle; restriction: max. 2 representatives per EUSDR core stakeholder meeting).

III. Administrative and financial matters

With regards to administrative support, DSP will support the establishment phase, facilitating meetings (online and onsite, if held on its premises) and the design of a capacity building programme until the end of 2022.

The matter of financial support²³ to the DYC is to be established and more options should be taken into account:

- A one-time technical assistance project support could be provided by EC such as within the EUSALP Youth Council;
- Possibilities to draft a pilot action on youth participation in the Danube Region Strategy supported by other financial instruments (e.g., ERASMUS+) could be explored.

As for 2022 the DSP will cover the necessary work on the youth activities as described in this concept. Any travelling, accommodation, capacity building and other events costs cannot be covered from the DSP budget.

The EC has offered a prospect to provide a onetime financial support for the establishment of the DYC via ECs technical assistance including a respective national co-financing.

Following the reached agreement within the DYC TF (at the 4th DYC TF) and given a mandate of EUSDR NCs to this concept, the LP of the DSP will search to provide an institutional background for securing the project in further close coordination with the EC, taking into account this concept.

Any options going beyond 2022 (End of current DSP project) would have to be coordinated with EUSDR NCs and the Danube Region Programme.

IV. Implementation steps

The following steps have been taken and/or shall be taken to establish the DYC and the DYON:

- Endorsement of establishing a Task Force for further elaboration of youth involvement in the EUSDR by National Coordinators in 2021 (June 2021)
- Initiation of the Task Force Danube Youth Council by the Slovak EUSDR Presidency to develop the selection procedure and to specify tasks of the potential Danube Youth Council, as described above (July 2021)
- Presentation of the draft Proposal for the establishment of the EUSDR Danube Youth Council (DYC) & Danube Youth Organisations Network (DYON) at the 10th Annual Forum in Bratislava (October 2021)
- Finalisation of the draft proposal by the TF DYC and endorsement by EUSDR National Coordinators (March 2022)
- Step by step implementation of the proposal in the course of 2022 and the following years, the first two milestones being pilot activities implemented by the DSP to establish the DYC (April-May 2022)
- Development and implementation of pilot activities to establish the DYC and a capacity building programme by DSP in cooperation with other EUSDR governance stakeholders, including the introduction of the DYC and its activities at the 11th EUSDR Annual Forum in October 2022 and at the Tirana Conference (European Youth Capital 2022)

²³ For the sake of equal treatment and due to the necessary and not yet clarified financial support, the DYC-TF advises no physical meetings of the DYC to be organised until the financing of the support - especially the coverage of travel costs for DYC members - is secured. Such online meetings can be organised with the deadline of end of June 2022, until the financing of the support is secured.

3.3. Danube Youth Organisations Network (DYON)

The Task Force DYC advises also on the establishment of a Danube Youth Organisations Network (DYON) that would put together national and/or regional youth organisations and other youth-oriented non-profit associations active in DR countries.

As the DYC is to be formed of individuals who may not have had any national or international institutional/ organisational cooperation experience, the DYON is to offer a platform for youth organisations to cooperate and share their needs and experiences among themselves and with the DYC and EUSDR core stakeholders.

DYON is an open network (i.e. not restricted to a certain number of members per countries and also not with an obligation for countries to delegate members to the DYON). Participation of the members is on voluntary basis.

The DYON shall be further conceptualised in cooperation with EUSDR Priority Areas (specifically PA 10 and other organisations from the Danube Region, such as the Danube Youth Network, the Danube Civil Society Forum, Agapedia Foundation and the State Ministry of Baden-Württemberg), potentially as part of the envisaged capacity building programme.

3.4. The next step

Following the announcement of the establishment of the EUSDR Danube Youth Council (DYC) & EUSDR Danube Youth Organisations Network (DYON) at the 10th Annual Forum, and further work within the DYC-TF (especially in the 4th meeting), the EUSDR NCs are asked to endorse the establishment of the EUSDR Danube Youth Council (DYC) & EUSDR Danube Youth Organisations Network (DYON) and implementation of the actions as described above.

Furthermore, the endorsement allows to explore possibilities to draft a DYC pilot action supported by the European Commission/DG REGIO and the DSP.

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