

## SUMMARY NOTE on:

### Workshop on Capacity building and institutional co-operation for the further development and integration of the Danube macro-region

Moderator:	Mr Georges Kremlis, European Commission, DG Environment
Key note speaker:	Mr Michael Theurer, Member of the European Parliament
Key note speaker:	Mr Stefan Lütgenau, Foundation for Strong European Regions
Key note speaker:	Prof Nikolay Mihaylov, Ruse University Angel Kanchev
Key note speaker:	Ms Daniela Schily, Mr Lyubomir Popyordanov, Danube Competence Centre
Key note speaker:	Ms Daniela Gasparikova, UNDP, Europe and CIS
Rapporteur:	Ms Vladislava Hristozova, European Commission, DG Regional Policy

The macro-regional model of new governance is a development of the territorial cohesion approach. The Danube Strategy process is based on the bottom-up approach. This is why the capacity building of and awareness rising among the stakeholders are of crucial importance in order to strengthen their existing and new institutions. The European Grouping for Territorial Co-operation (EGTC) is a useful instrument in this respect.

The first contribution was made by **Mr Michael Theurer**, a Member of the European Parliament; member of the REGI committee and a vice president of the Danube Forum. Mr Theurer identified as the major bottleneck in the region the lack of knowhow and capacity of the authorities. At the same time there are financial resources available and the major challenge is to make good use of them. The needs concern more the availability of platforms and forums to bring people together. The major stakeholders influencing the development of the Danube region should have an access to the policy development. The main investments in the region should foresee the improvement of the major infrastructure, and focus on technology transfer and innovation. Exchange of ideas is especially important in the area of research and innovation. The link between the universities and the business should be improved.

**Mr Stefan Lütgenau** presented the views of the civil society organisations. The Foundation of Strong European Regions includes several NGOs and is active in the Danube region. Mr Lütgenau underlined the need of the non-governmental sector in the development and implementation of the Danube Strategy, as well as the very poor civil society participation so far. In his view, the reasons are the low capacity of the sector, the need for resources and the need for a longer term perspective and the sustainability of the Danube strategy process. Mr Lütgenau presented further as a flagship project proposal the establishment of a Danube region association of the civil society.

**Prof. N. Mihaylov** from the Ruse University presented the Danube Rectors' Conference, a co-operation for researchers and students between the universities located on the Danube.

A joint initiative in the tourism sector was presented by **Ms Danuela Schily** and **Mr Lyubomir Popyordanov** from the Danube Competence Centre in Serbia. Ms Schily put an accent on the difference of co-operation structures and links in the Western and the Eastern part of the Danube region. The Eastern part should catch up in this aspect and this should be done through local initiative and commitment. It should be expected that the lower Danube regions take the initiative and the responsibility to become equal members in the process. The Danube Competence Centre concentrates its activities in the branding and linking tourism initiatives in the region between Croatia and the Danube delta. The private sector and the NGOs in the region are active players and in order to accelerate the implementation of their actions they need clear rules and a legal framework designed to ease the territorial co-operation.

The workshop finished with a presentation of **Ms Daniela Gasparikova** from the UNDP, Europe and CIS. She presented the results and lessons learned from the UNDP actions in the Eastern regions of Slovakia and Hungary. The UNDP actions are concentrated in three areas: environment, local development and social inclusion. It tries to develop integrated projects with the commitment and involvement of the local population. The lessons learned are on the first place that small scale initiatives are the best mean to start a development. Large infrastructure projects are of high importance for the regional development; however, they remain detached from the population. The commitment of the local and central government remains crucial for the success of the actions. The UNDP has identified that the voluntarism could have a high value added in the process, but it remains relatively unused, especially in the new Member States.

Special attention is paid to the marginalised groups, including the Roma community. The results show that communication is not enough when dealing with marginalised groups. UNDP focuses on integrated projects for the entire population and involves in them the Roma community. With these measures it includes the Roma in the development of the region but avoid any positive discrimination. The reason for this decision is mainly based on the need to ensure the support and understanding of the mainstream population. The specific measures include more the provision of information and knowhow to the marginalised groups to be able to participate on an equal basis in the actions.

This workshop showed that there are a lot of ideas and energy in the region which can be used in more active co-operation. The people of the region need to have more possibilities, platforms and forums, where they can exchange these ideas and energies. This applies especially for the link between the upper and lower part of the Danube River where there are only few existing links. The region should work towards using all the potentials of the European Union, i.e. the single market, the transfer of research and new technologies, the fostering of innovation and joint management of fish resources. The civil society and the business are very committed to the Danube Strategy process and need the central governments to provide the suitable legal framework in order to ease the co-operation, as well as the local authorities' participation in the implementation of the actions.