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EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

Subject: Scoping Paper for the public consultation

The European Council has formally asked the European Commission to present an EU Strategy for the Danube Region, stating in its conclusions of 19 June 2009: “Sustainable development should also be pursued through an integrated approach to the specific challenges facing particular regions (...). It (...) invites the Commission to present an EU strategy for the Danube region before the end of 2010.”

Objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

The Danube Region is one of the most important areas in Europe. It covers several Member States and neighbouring countries in the river basin and in the coastal zones on the Black Sea. The area of the whole River Basin can be considered to be 800.000 km², with a population over 100 million, centred on - but not exclusive to - the 3.000 km of river passing through ten countries (more than any other European River). On it lie four capital cities, and significant other important centres are part of the Region. There are many major issues to be addressed in the Region including economic and social disparities, infrastructure deficiencies, environmental status, prevention against risks, etc.. Following the accessions of 2004 and 2007, there is a need and an opportunity to overcome the legacy of former divisions and for the potential of the Region as an integral part of the European Union to be more fully realised. This EU Strategy for the Danube Region is also within the EU 2020 framework being adopted at the Spring European Council. In addition, it is in line with the adopted Lisbon Treaty which states that the EU shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States. Macro-regional strategies are prime test cases of what territorial cohesion means in practical terms. In particular, the cross-sectoral integrated approach is overarching the whole process of the strategy development.

Context and aims of the consultation

The European Commission is therefore actively seeking the contributions of all those interested (including Member States, neighbouring countries, regions, municipalities, international organisations, financial institutions, the socio-economic partners and civil society). This is why the Commission is organising a wide consultation including a series of public events starting in Ulm in February and concluding in Romania in June 2010, also incorporating this public consultation through internet. The purpose of this Scoping Paper is to guide those providing a contribution by identifying the main issues to be discussed.

Below (in the section ‘specific questions’) are the main topics suggested, together with examples of questions to be raised and on which input would be welcomed. Please feel free also to raise other issues. When considering the questions, ideally, it is important to keep in mind that the actions and projects to be proposed should (a) concern the Danube Region as a macro-region - as opposed to the national or EU level -, (b) have a positive impact on the citizens, enterprises, and the environment and (c) be feasible in the short to mid-term. The actions and projects should also consider the different issues as much as possible in an integrated manner, for example looking at how research can be taken into account in policy fields such as the environment, the energy, the human capital, health, etc., as well as how cooperation can be reinforced across borders.

Next steps

All contributions will be analysed by the Commission, and a report summarising the inputs will be available on internet shortly after the end of the consultation. These will also be further discussed in the frame of the conferences organised before the Summer 2010 (full list of these events available at REGIO-EU-DANUBE-STRATEGY@ec.europa.eu). The Strategy will be adopted by the Commission by December 2010.

OVERALL QUESTIONS

Topics

- What are the main challenges and opportunities in the Danube Region?
- Which topics should be covered by the Strategy?
- What are the main concrete actions and projects to be recommended in the coming years?

Implementation

- How is it possible to cooperate better, to coordinate more and to exchange good practices?
- How can the cross-border links and the transnational policies be improved?
- What would be the added value of this Strategy to the existing mechanisms in the Region?
- What would be expected of the different EU policies and their financial instruments?
- What are the needs in terms of funding and how to improve the use of existing financial instruments to achieve the objective of the strategy?

Approach

- How could the Strategy contribute to improve the situation?
- What are the advantages / disadvantages of an approach going beyond national boundaries?
- What is the value - if any - of an approach which covers several topics together and looks at their interrelationship (e.g. how economic and environmental issues interact?)
- What is the added value of the EU in the process?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

To improve connectivity and communication systems (within and outside the Region)

For the following topics, in addition to the specific questions, you are invited to indicate:

- The main challenges / opportunities;

- The main concrete actions and projects to be recommended in the coming years.

You are also invited to indicate how these topics might be considered together and how they can interact positively with each others and with the other topics mentioned below.

1. Inland waterways, road and rail systems
2. Intermodal nodes (including ports and airports)
3. Energy systems and security of supply
4. Increased use of renewable and clean energies, energy efficiency and savings
5. Information Society

To protect the environment, preserve water resources and prevent against natural risks

For the following topics, in addition to the specific questions, you are invited to indicate:

- The main challenges / opportunities;

- The main concrete actions and projects to be recommended in the coming years.

You are also invited to indicate how these topics might be considered together and how they can interact positively with each others and with the other topics mentioned below.

6. Environment of the water (especially rivers)
7. Quality of air and soils (including waste)
8. Biodiversity and landscapes
9. Natural risks (floods and droughts)
10. Mitigation and adaptation to climate change

To reinforce socio-economic, human and institutional development

For the following topics, in addition to the specific questions, you are invited to indicate:

- The main challenges / opportunities;

- The main concrete actions and projects to be recommended in the coming years.

You are also invited to indicate how these topics might be considered together and how they can interact positively with each others and with the other topics mentioned below.

11. Internal market / trade
12. Competitiveness of economic sectors (agriculture, industry and services)
13. Innovation / research
14. Human capital (including job markets, education and health)
15. Institutional capacity
16. Danube identity / culture (including tourism)
17. Roma community and other disadvantaged groups

Please also feel free to add other relevant topics or suggest improved approaches.

Your contributions in relation to these questions will be most useful to us in developing an EU Strategy which addresses the critical concerns of the Danube Region. These contributions can be sent to REGIO-EU-DANUBE-STRATEGY@ec.europa.eu before the 31 March 2010.

Thank for your contributions!