

JOINT STATEMENT

Adopted by the Third Conference of the Danube Parliamentarians (Belgrade, 22 June 2015)

The Joint Statement was adopted by the participants of the Third Conference of the Danube Parliamentarians held in Belgrade, on 22 June 2015, based on the main principles of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region and highlighting the opportunities for further economic development of the Danube region, by enhancing the existing and developing sustainable policies in the field of integrated environmental protection and efficient energy management, tourism, cultural and creative industries, further modernisation of transport networks, strengthening cooperation in the field of security, and in the spirit of good neighbourly relations.

The Conference was attended by parliamentary delegations from the Republic of Austria (the Federal State of Vienna), Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, Federal Republic of Germany (Land Baden-Wuerttemberg), Hungary, Romania (the Senate and Chamber of Deputies), the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Serbia (with parliamentarian delegation from the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina), the Republic of Slovenia, Ukraine;

Taking part in the exchange of opinions on topics envisaged by the Agenda of the Conference and recalling the previous Declaration and Joint Statement signed in Ulm in 2013 and in Budapest in 2014, the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region, as well as the Europe 2020 Strategy;

Taking into account the recommendations of the 2nd Conference of Danube Parliamentarians and welcoming the adoption the Danube Region Operative Flood Management and Cooperation Programme;

Acknowledging the enhancement of the governance system of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region by setting up the Danube Strategy Point and the Trio Presidency;

The parliamentarians of the Danube region encourage:

1. The citizens in the region, having in mind the common history, to connect with an aim of expanding the cooperation in the Danube region based on fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, as well as the respect for the rights of minorities and exploiting the great potential of the natural resources of the region for increased economic cooperation;
2. The use of the potential of the Danube region by developing joint road, rail and air transport, which requires an increased dedication to the environmental protection supported by modern environmental technologies and cooperation of the countries in this field;
3. The development of a harmonized cross-border flood defence system, for the whole Danube river basin and its tributaries, particularly having in mind the experience the Western Balkan States underwent in May 2014, and stressing the need for continuing the work started in the framework of the Danube Region Operative Flood Management and Cooperation Programme with the participation of the Danube region states;
4. The protection of the unique natural values and heritage of the Danube Region, which form the basis of human well-being and sustainable economic development, and bearing in mind the principle of sustainable development

while planning and implementing activities under the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region.

5. Increasing investments in research, science and innovation that lead to improved transfer and dissemination of technology by taking steps to modernize the legal framework, build strong institutions and develop basic skills, and by providing technology transfer training.
6. Further investments in research and science as a driving force for the development of the Danube region and stronger efforts in the field of education and cultural and creative industries, which are necessary, and also encourage a greater inclusion of marginalised, minority groups, particularly through educational programs for the Roma, and increasing of the employment rate of all the citizens in the region;
7. The development of communication and exchange of experience on regular basis, between the states involved in the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region and the coordination with other macro-regional strategies; the compliance and harmonisation of legislation in the fields of importance for the Danube Region Strategy with an aim of achieving a better cooperation;
8. The rationality, efficiency and sustainability in the use of existing funds, having in mind that the funds for the implementation of the Danube Region Strategy objectives in the new INTERREG program for the Danube Region are also limited; and having in mind that an improved coordination of the existing 2014 - 2020 Multiannual Financial Framework funds and financial mechanisms is needed, where appropriate and applicable;

9. Cooperation between the members of committees for European affairs/European integration of their parliaments, through the exchange of experience in the European integration process;
10. Establishment of a Working Group of women politicians from National and Regional Parliaments in the Danube Region with an aim of exchanging experiences and developing a network of civil society organizations;
11. A more active role of the parliamentarians of the Danube Region States in attaining the goals of the Danube Region Strategy; the parliamentarians agree to continuously invest efforts in involving citizens and representatives of the civil society and other stakeholders, as well as regional and local communities in the areas of their common interest;
12. The maintenance of peace, development of democracy, rule of law, fight against corruption and crime, improvement of education and policies regarding cultural and creative industries and health care policies, which are a prerequisite for further development of the whole region.
13. The Parliamentarians to welcome the fact that the Conference of Danube Parliamentarians will be for the first time officially involved in the Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) to be held on 29 and 30 October 2015 in Ulm - as requested in the Final Declaration from Budapest of 2014 - and declare their wish to continue this practice in future, on regular basis.