

FINAL JOINT STATEMENT
adopted by the 6th Conference of Danube Parliamentarians
(Bucharest, 21st of March, 2019)

Having regard to the Report of the European Commission, of 29th January 2019, on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies, which reveals a decline of the political momentum around the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and a need to re-boost ownership and commitment by the participating countries,

Considering that the EUSDR proved its added value for the development of the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the participating countries,

Acknowledging that, despite many success stories within the four pillars and the eleven Priority Areas, development and prosperity gaps between up and downstream territories still exist and need to be tackled at as many governance levels as possible,

Recognising that possible future cuts in the Cohesion Funds might increase the disparities between Europe's regions, putting at stake the very macro-regional strategies,

Taking into account that for a better financing of EUSDR, the *three No's* principle governing all macro-regional strategies needs a flexible approach,

We, the parliamentarians of the Danube Region gathered in Bucharest:

a) In the field of cooperation:

- **Call** for a better regional cooperation between the EUSDR participating states and for a strengthened dialogue with the European Commission for an enhanced political coherence and for a better coordination of important aspects of EUSDR.
- **Encourage** the exchange of experiences and best practices within the EUSDR Priority Areas and invite all stakeholders, including the civil society, to take part in the public consultation regarding the renewal of the Action Plan.
- **Underline** that EU Member States must seize any opportunities to defend the objectives of the macro-regional strategies when negotiating the Cohesion Policy legislative package.
- **Call** for a comprehensive approach of all available funding instruments that could bring significant development for the whole region; encourage all EUSDR countries to make full use of available funding instruments.
- **Call** for the „Danube Transnational Programme“ (DTP) to be continued in the next programme period in the current good-performing structure, since it is an indispensable instrument for the implementation of EUSDR-related activities.

- Call for the development of electricity and natural gas transport system interconnections as a priority in order to achieve a single energy market in the region of the Danube states, to increase the economic competitiveness and the sustainable prices for the citizens of the Danube Region.

b) In the field of culture and tourism:

- **Reaffirm** our commitment to facilitate public-private partnerships in the field of protection, revitalisation and sustainable use of cultural heritage, the development of a green and sustainable tourism transport infrastructure, as well as the preservation of the Danube natural environment.
- **Support** the preservation of natural values and of tourism products combining tangible and intangible heritage, as well as networks and business clusters based on stakeholders expertise and citizens participation.
- **Acknowledge** the need to stimulate the exchange and networking in the field of contemporary arts, new forms of artistic expression and the creativity of young artists.
- **Support** the identification of new solutions to manage the problem of overcrowded destinations and gradually manage the shift from mass tourism to sustainable tourism.
- Encourage the digital economy for a competitive tourism industry, favouring free enterprise and innovation, including virtual and augmented reality and citizens' digital platforms.
- **Encourage** the diversification of tourism to include forgotten traditions, dances, songs and other forms of culture that present the potential to also support the communities resilience with respect to social tensions that have long impacted the Danube region over its history. This may serve as an input for the "Blue Book" on Danube cultural identity.
- **Further support** the creation of the cultural route of artistic handcrafts in the EUSDR countries, as well as the extension of the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route, by including more states in the Danube basin.
- **Advocate** the development of a Danube Brand for the entire Danube region and the implementation of a harmonised tourism monitoring system, to provide complete and comparable statistical data in all the 14 states of the EUSDR.

c) In the fields of knowledge society, research, education and information technologies:

- **Encourage** disruptive technologies, highly innovative technologies that emerge from academic clusters and from research carried out by the business sector, to diversify the local economy and to enhance the use of human capital and natural resources, including renewable energies and new transportation means.
- **Support** local and community values while shaping education policies, so that young generations can give a new momentum to local businesses, based on cutting edge technologies, such as space technologies, nanotechnologies and robotics.
- **Call** for a more intensive cooperation among the educational and research institutions and students in the countries along the Danube for the sake of an exchange of information and experiences and encourage the use of open-access databases.

As agreed in Budapest, in 2014, the Conference of Danube Parliamentarians shall be organized on a yearly basis, and as stated in the Final Declaration of the 5th Conference of Danube Parliamentarians shall be hosted by the Parliament of the country holding the EUSDR presidency. Therefore, we hereby declare our full support for the next Conference of Danube Parliamentarians in 2020, which will be held in Croatia.

Bucharest, March 21st, 2019