

JOINT STATEMENT
adopted by the 2nd Conference of Danube
Parliamentarians
(Budapest, 2-3 October, 2014)

The Final Declaration signed by the participants of the First Danube Parliamentary Conference held in July 2013, in Ulm, stated “that citizens should be intensively involved in implementing the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region. National and regional parliaments and their representatives in the Danube Region wish to act as mediators between the concerns of citizens and the governments and administrations which implement the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (hereinafter: EUSDR). In this context, it is particularly useful to mobilize the parliamentarians to increase awareness among their own constituency and to improve relations among citizens and governments as well as local and national administrative structures”.

Participants agreed that “a Danube Parliamentary Conference should meet at regular intervals so that national and regional parliaments in countries along the Danube can remain closely involved in the EUSDR and in the Danube Region regarding on-going development and implementation of the EUSDR. Regular exchange among the Danube Region parliaments would also offer the possibility of promoting transparent and democratic decision-making structures and processes in the Danube Region. Attention should be given to a cost-efficient, streamlined work structure when establishing a permanent Danube Parliamentary Conference.

With regard to the above mentioned the participants:

- stressed the need to improve existing cooperation mechanisms and networks and promoting where relevant the development of such mechanisms within and between participating countries, Member States and non-EU countries in order to address common challenges and to benefit from strengthened cooperation for economic, social and territorial cohesion.
- emphasized the necessity of raising awareness of the cooperation possibilities amongst stakeholders in order to foster participation of regional, local and civil society partners in the implementation of the strategies, and reiterating the role parliamentarians could play in sharing information in their constituencies.
- recalled the Final Declaration of Ulm stating that information should be disseminated more intensively about specific projects that citizens can directly benefit from within the framework of the EUSDR. This would increase public support for the Strategy and contribute substantially to the Europe-wide integration in the Danube region.

Referring to the Council Conclusions¹ on the added value of the macro-regional strategies which recognises the parliamentary dimension as an important link between the macro-regional strategies and society as a whole, both at regional and national as well as European level,

the participants of the 2nd Conference of Danube Parliamentarians agreed on the following:

1. Setting up a consultation mechanism between Governments and their respective national/state Parliaments

Recognizing that there is an untapped potential of improved communication, information sharing and consultation between governments and their respective parliaments in order to have stronger public awareness, support for and participation in the EUSDR, and with the aim to achieve an enhanced cooperation, participants agree to initiate a consultation mechanism between their governments and their respective parliaments, which should take into account the country/region specific management of the EUSDR.

While stressing that the setting up of an exchange mechanism is the exclusive competence of each individual country/state, and the recommendations made are not entailing any obligations on the Parliaments, the mechanism could be shaped as follows:

- National/state parliaments invite at least once a year the National Coordinator/Government representative in charge (hereinafter: NC) to inform on the state of the implementation of the EUSDR, on the achievements of the Annual Forum of the EUSDR², the main challenges and opportunities for their respective country and the cooperation possibilities in the priority areas and to have an exchange about it (the topics).
- Each Parliament establishes a permanent exchange mechanism, eg. by appointing a contact person from its administrative staff who will have regular contact with the office of the NC and disseminate the information, documents received from the NC on a regular basis to the relevant Committees and MPs.
- The Parliamentary Contact Point (PCP) will be in charge of channelling requests from MPs towards the Office of the NC.

¹ Council Conclusions on the added value of macro-regional strategies, 15 October 2013, 14745/13

² Annual meeting of the representatives of the EU and of the governments participating in the EUSDR, which was held this year in Vienna, June 25-26.

- Parliamentary Contact Points may also assist in facilitating interaction between MPs from other countries of the EUSDR.

2. Setting up a consultation mechanism between the European Parliament and the national/state Parliaments of the countries participating in the EUSDR

In line with the Council Conclusions on governance of macro-regional strategies (to be accepted in 2014), and taking into consideration the Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Participating States of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and of the European Commission (Vienna, 26 June 2014) regarding the better involvement of the European and national Parliaments in the EUSDR, the participants agreed on the following:

- In order to foster cooperation between the parliamentary dimension of the EUSDR and the European Parliament, interested MEPs from the member states of the Danube region are invited to the Annual Conference of Danube Parliamentarians.
- Participants propose the European Parliament to consider holding a yearly session for consultation on the Danube Region Strategy.

3. Future framework of the Conference of Danube Parliamentarians

Acknowledging the added value of holding a Conference of Danube Parliamentarians - open to the Republic of Austria (State of Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Wien, Burgenland), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republic of Srpska, District Brcko, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Croatia, Czech Republic, Federal Republic of Germany (State of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria), Hungary, Republic of Romania, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia (Autonomous Province of Vojvodina), Slovak Republic, Republic of Slovenia as well as the Ukraine – on a regular basis, and the need for a clear structure which is not creating an additional institution, the participants agreed on the following:

- The Conference of Danube Parliamentarians will be organised on a yearly basis.
- A country willing to host the next Conference may signal its intention to the organizers of the upcoming Conference. Decision on the next Conference's host is taken during the Annual Parliamentarian Conference.

- If a rotating chair of the EUSDR with an agreed rotation principle is introduced at the governmental level, such principle is to be considered *mutatis mutandis* also in the organization of Conferences of Danube Parliamentarians.
- While keeping the agenda subject to the discretion of the respective host country, the following topics are recommended to be included in the agenda of the Annual Parliamentarian Conferences in order to keep the delegates updated on the state of the implementation of the EUSDR:
 - Presentation of the host country on the state of play on the implementation of the EUSDR, as well as the conclusions, results of the Annual Forum of the EUSDR.
 - Overview of the EUSDR related activities of the national/state Parliaments since the previous Annual Conference.
 - Discussion of one thematic priority area, presentation of best practises on cooperation in this field.
- The Conference proposes the organizers of the EUSDR Annual Forum to provide an opportunity for the representative of the host country of the Annual Conference of Danube Parliamentarians to give a short overview on the work done and the conclusions of the Conference.
- The Participants entrust the Parliament chairing the Conference of the Danube Parliamentarians to submit to the participants of the Annual Forum the final document of the Conference.

4. Thematic priority area: Flood protection

- Participant stress the importance of a coordinated cross-border flood protection for the whole territory of the river basin of the Danube and its tributary streams.
- Participants stress that during the implementation of the EU Water Policy Directive³ and the EU Flood Directive⁴ the EUSDR should support with its own instruments the coordination between the countries in order to guarantee

³ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy

⁴ Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks

that the planned interventions should be as much coordinated, supportive and efficient as possible.

- Participants call the attention of their respective governments to the maximal use of the existent expertise and knowledge base and also to the necessity of securing financing for information events, forecasting and practical infrastructure works for the flood protection.
- Participants welcome the constantly growing cooperation of the “environmental risks “ Priority Area 5 (PA5) and the ICPDR in the field of flood protection in the framework (Management of Environmental Risks) of the EUSDR, which is comprehensively supporting lowering of flood risk of the people living in the region against the more and more extreme flood disasters incidents by sharing data for flood forecast on the river basin, supporting flood protection planning, harmonising and sharing flood rescue capabilities.
- Participants welcome that the common work related to floods and extreme weather phenomena is done by the countries of the region in the framework of the EUSDR PA5 and the ICPDR, with the direct involvement of the relevant national authorities and regional organs. They encourage the municipalities and local communities, to make use of the professional outcomes of this work, to prepare actively for handling potential dangers.

5. Integration of the Roma population

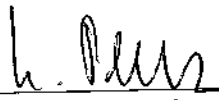
The Conference stresses the importance of the integration of the Roma population living in the Danube Region, and points out the significance of integration measures such as education programmes for young Roma as well as measures for the improvement of the housing situation of the Roma.

The participants emphasize the importance of a detailed discussion of this issue within the next Conferences.

Signed in Budapest, 3 October, 2014

REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA

LOWER AUSTRIA

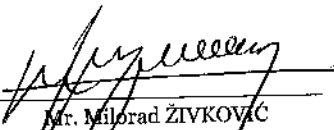


Dr. Hans PENZ
President of the State Parliament

BURGENLAND


Mr. Gerhard STEIER
President of the State Parliament

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA




Mr. Milorad ŽIVKOVIĆ
Speaker of the House of Representatives

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

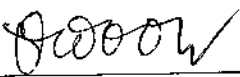


Mr. Josip LEKO
Speaker of the Parliament

CZECH REPUBLIC




Mr. Petr GAZDIK
Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies



Mr. Přemysl SOBOTKA
Vice-President of the Senate


FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG



Mr. Winfried MACK
Member of the State Parliament

BAVARIA



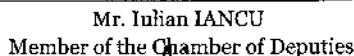
Mr. Franz RIEGER
Member of the State Parliament

HUNGARY

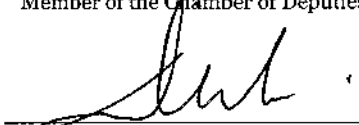


Mr. István JAKAB
Deputy-Speaker of the National Assembly

ROMANIA



Mr. Iulian IANCU
Member of the Chamber of Deputies



Mr. Mihai Cristian DĂNUT
Member of the Senate

MONTENEGRO



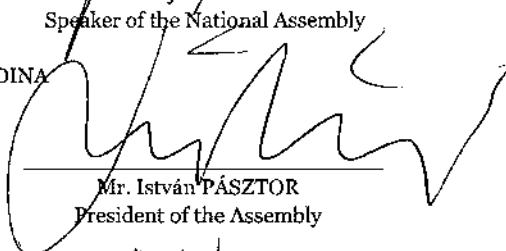
Mr. Suljo MUSTAFIĆ
Vice-President of the Parliament of Montenegro

REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



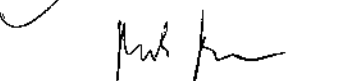
Ms. Maja GOJKOVIĆ
Speaker of the National Assembly

AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF VOJVODINA



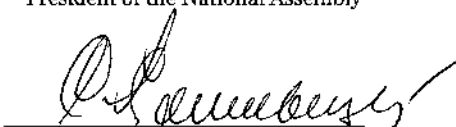
Mr. István PÁSZTOR
President of the Assembly

REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA



Mr. Milan BRGLEZ
President of the National Assembly

UKRAINE



Mr. Serhij GRYNEVETSKYI
Member of the Verkhovna Rada

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