

Göttweig Declaration 2011

I. The Strategy for the Danube Region

On 13 April 2011 the EU Council of Foreign Ministers endorsed the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, which covers eight EU Member States and another six European countries. This macro-regional strategy, which aims at making more intensive use of the region's potential, will be formally adopted by the European Council in June 2011 under the Hungarian EU Council Presidency.

Although the strategy will not come with extra EU finance, a considerable amount of funding is already available to the region through a host of EU programmes. The aim is to coordinate the use of these funds to greater effect and to show how macro-regional cooperation can help tackle local problems.

The Strategy comprises a detailed Plan of Action, which is based on four pillars:

1. Further integration of the Danube region (e.g. greater mobility, promotion of the use of sustainable energy sources and promotion of culture and tourism);
2. Environmental protection in the Danube region (e.g. restoring good water quality, management of environmental risks, preservation of biological diversity);
3. Enhancing prosperity in the Danube region (e.g. developing research capacities, improvements in education and training, furthering IT development, promotion of the competitiveness of businesses and investments in human beings and their qualifications);
4. Strengthening of the Danube region (e.g. extension of institutional capacities and promoting cooperation in the fight against organised crime).

This macro-regional, multi-sectorial and multi-level approach is of essential importance and will receive continued support. Implementation of these projects will require the active cooperation of all sectors and the local, regional and national players involved.

II. Assessment of what has been achieved

A ten-point plan for a sustainable and coherent macro-regional strategy formulated in the Göttweig Declaration was signed on the occasion of the European Forum Wachau of 2010, calling, amongst other things, for a comprehensive strategic approach that would include the aspects of prosperity and safety of citizens among the focal points of the strategy. This demand has been met in the context of both the third pillar, "Enhancing Prosperity", and the fourth one, "Strengthening of the Danube Region". The justified call for giving due consideration to regional needs, for including local and regional players in the process and ensuring respect of the subsidiarity principle was taken care of by giving special priority to these matters in the EU

Strategy for the Danube Region. In addition, calls for common crisis management (for instance the *implementation of flood risk management plans for the entire length of the Danube*) and for the use of the Region's research and development potential (*investment of 3% of GDP in research and development by 2020*) were indirectly met within the context of temporary priority objectives.

III. Six criteria for the future orientation of regional and cohesion policies aiming at creating competitive European regions

The formal adoption of the Strategy for the Danube Region will mark the start, as a pilot project, of a second macro-regional strategy alongside the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. According to the 5th Cohesion Report of the European Commission, these documents are to be "comprehensive and integrated instruments tailored to meet central challenges". One important objective is the strengthening of "territorial cohesion".

The review of the EU budget with a view to establishing the Financial Framework 2014+ has started. The object is to restructure the EU budget and put a stronger focus of the cohesion policy on the key objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In order to create European regions that are internationally competitive and to promote territorial cohesion the European Forum Wachau calls for due consideration to be given to the following six criteria when establishing the future orientation of regional and cohesion policies:

1. Within the framework of the cohesion policy all EU regions are to be eligible for EU funding, with emphasis in particular on measures of a European dimension along the lines of the EU 2020 Strategy. Particular attention is to be paid to the continuity of programmes (continuation of measures that have proved successful) in the interest of integrated multi-sectorial implementation.
2. In this context central importance attaches to the strengthening of the social dimension of cohesion and the harmonisation of the cohesion policy with all EU policies focusing on structural policy matters.
3. In all areas of cohesion policy (programming, implementation, evaluation and control) due consideration should be given to the principle of proportionality as a function of programme and project size.
4. To obviate deficiencies in programme implementation, stable legal and institutional framework conditions must be established. The continuity of successful management and control systems is an important prerequisite for effective implementation.
5. A policy aiming at achieving optimum results has to bear the regional context in mind; irrespective of the level and area of application; making a policy conditional upon specific targets being reached must be considered detrimental.
6. The promotion of measures in the field of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation has to be embedded in a strategic framework which will require specific legal bases for efficient implementation.