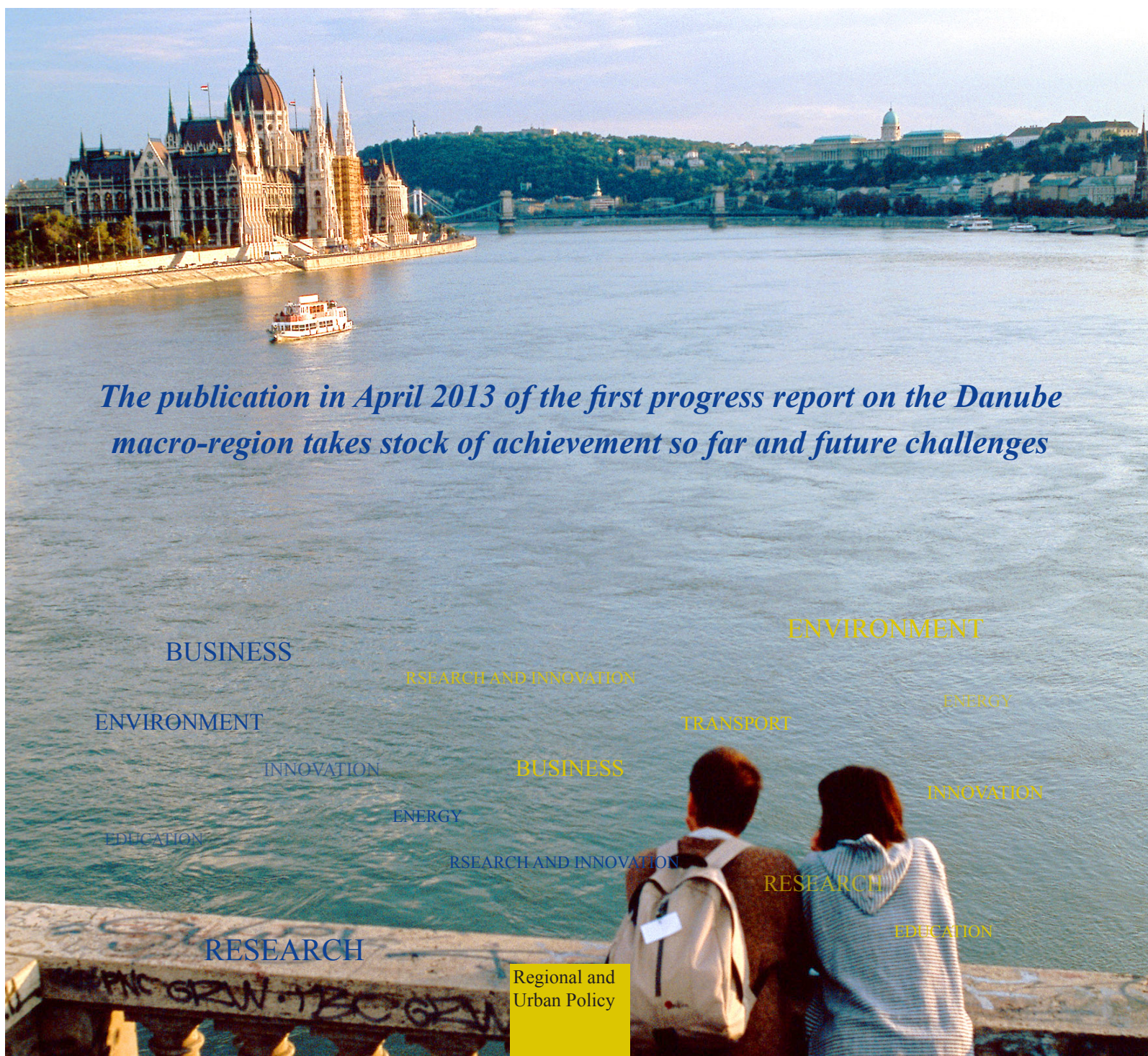




EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION-

TWO YEARS FLOWING



The publication in April 2013 of the first progress report on the Danube macro-region takes stock of achievement so far and future challenges



Regional and
Urban Policy

COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Discussing the achievements of the Strategy and putting forward plans for future joint action is of crucial importance for successful cooperation. As such, the 1st Annual Forum of the EUSDR was held in Regensburg in November 2012, as a opportunity to discuss the implementation of the Strategy and to confirm political support. A report of the event with the agenda, speeches, webstreaming and images can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/danube_forum2012/index_en.cfm The 2nd Annual Forum will be held in Bucharest on 28-29 October 2013. For detailed information on the EUSDR, please visit our website: <http://danube-region.eu>



MAINTAINING THE FLOW... RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of key projects, such as those mentioned above, are bringing tangible benefits to the lives of citizens in this, the EU's second macro-region. To ensure the continued success of the Strategy, the Commission is setting out a number of recommendations, such as the need for good, stable and adequately financed implementation structures; sustainable leadership and strategic planning from the Danube countries and regions; a systematic embedding of the Strategy in EU, national and regional programmes for the period 2014-2020; a focus on results through paying further attention to appropriate targets and indicators, milestones and roadmaps; and the need to reinforce the coherence of Danube actions with EU policies by ensuring that Strategy work is discussed by actors in existing institutions and in relevant sectoral meetings of the Council of Ministers (for example, EU Transport Ministers, Environment Ministers, Research and Interior Ministers).

MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES-THE WAY AHEAD?

The European Commission is expected to publish an evaluation of the EU's Macro-Regional Strategies in June 2013.



HOW DID IT COME ABOUT?

The Danube macro-region covers 14 countries - including 8 EU Member States and Croatia. Home to over 100 million residents - one-fifth of the EU population, the region's countries differ in terms of economic strength, but are strongly interlinked, with potential for further integration and growth, as well as shared approaches to common challenges. For example, the potential of the river as a transport route is not yet fully exploited, while floods persistently present problems in the region. To address these issues, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) provides a robust basis for cohesive cooperation for neighbouring countries and regions, allowing for better collaboration to improve the effectiveness, leverage and impact of policies at EU, national and local level.

In June 2009, EU Heads of State and Government called on the European Commission to prepare an EU Strategy for the Danube Region before the end of 2010, which was then endorsed by the European Council in 2011. The Strategy identified concrete actions and examples of projects in 11 thematic Priority Areas as a result of close collaboration between the Commission and the Danube Region countries. It followed the approach pioneered by the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

WHAT'S COVERED?

The Danube Strategy addresses a wide range of issues across **4 main pillars** and **11 Priority Areas**. These are:

⇒ **Connecting the Region**

- improve mobility and intermodality of inland waterways, rail, road and air
- encourage more sustainable energy
- promote culture and tourism, people-to-people contacts

⇒ **Protecting the Environment**

- restore and maintain water quality
- manage environmental risks
- preserve biodiversity, landscapes and air and soil quality

⇒ **Building Prosperity**

- develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)
- support business competitiveness
- invest in people and their skills

⇒ **Strengthening the Region**

- step up institutional capacity and cooperation
- work together to tackle security and organised crime

SHARED KNOW-HOW FOR A SHARED VISION

The Strategy facilitates new methods of working together to make the most of existing structures and resources. It establishes what the key needs are, identifies what activities should be supported in response, strengthens existing legislation and institutions, and makes the available sources of investment go as far as possible.

This cooperative method involves a wide range of stakeholders at national and regional level in Danube countries to drive the day-to-day implementation forward.



PROJECTS STARTING UP



- Historic and symbolic link between Bulgaria and Romania

The **Vidin-Calafat Bridge** was built between Bulgaria and Romania to provide a vital link on a key priority route of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). The bridge - only the second one along the 630 km river section of the border, is a good example of bilateral cooperation and is expected to remove a major bottleneck for international long-distance transport to Romania and Central Europe.

- Removing shipwrecks and boosting sustainability

The **Danube Shipwreck Removal Project** aims to remove shipwrecks from the Danube, Sava and Tisa in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria - improving navigation and ecological conditions so as to develop the inland waterway to its full potential.

- Connecting Danube SMEs

The **Danube Region Business Forum**, coordinated by the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, provides an important networking platform for over 300 SMEs. It encourages business-to-business meetings, and supports links with knowledge providers such as research institutes and universities.

- Research and Innovation

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre provides **scientific support to the Strategy**. Work has begun to collect and harmonise data on common challenges such as environmental protection, navigability, irrigation and agricultural development and energy production, in order to improve integrated and coordinated decision making in the region.

Preparatory work has begun to establish a **Danube Research and Innovation Fund**, pooling national and regional investment, and building on the experience of the BONUS programme in the Baltic Sea Region. A first joint Declaration of Danube Region Ministers for Research was signed in Ulm on 9 July 2012. The Commission fully supports this.

- Preventing floods

The **DANUBE FLOODRISK** project promotes cooperation methods with 19 institutions in 8 Danube countries, sharing databases and flood mapping.

- Fighting crime

A police chief meeting in January 2012 launched an initiative to intensify cooperation among **police authorities** in the Danube Region, improving measures against river-related crimes (including organised crime), and setting up a **transnational law enforcement platform**. In addition, EUROPOL has developed a specific project on threat analysis for the Danube Region.

SO WHO'S DOING WHAT?

The 11 thematic fields are run by Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) - high-level officials of national and regional administrations and experts in their areas. They are supported by counterparts from across the Danube Region, and are organised in 11 Steering Groups - one per Priority Area. These are important new cooperation platforms.

At national and regional level, implementation is ensured by National Contact Points (NCP), embedding the Strategy in the national and regional settings, ensuring that actions are coherent with EU goals and objectives, as well as more local ones, and encouraging policy makers to 'think macro-regional'. Regular meetings of national Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and sectoral ministers, as well as initiatives by cities and regions aim to ensure the necessary political commitment at all levels.

The European level drives the action forward and helps root the Strategy in EU policies, through contact with stakeholders in the Danube countries - establishing links to EU decision makers, and through institutional support provided by the EU budget.

Civil society actors are included in the work - in stakeholder seminars, Steering Groups and the Annual Forum, and particularly in Priority Area 10, 'Institutional Capacity' - while constant efforts are made to attract private investment.



WHERE'S THE MONEY COMING FROM?

Initiatives and projects developed in the framework of the Strategy are already supported through the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and other EU funding sources such as the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) the TEN-T programme and the Framework Programme for Research and Development. The Strategy will also be embedded in the relevant ESIF regional policy programmes from 2014-2020. Other than EU investment sources, Public-Private Partnerships, national, regional and local sources and as well as financial institutions and NGOs have been involved in the funding process.