



The new Urban Platform Policy of Priority Area 10 (PA 10)

The Urban Agenda in the EUSDR

The Danube Region with 115 Million inhabitants is one of the European regions with the largest density of cities, many of them capital cities and metropolitan areas, giving the Region a potentially powerful and competitive polycentric urban structure. However, cities in central and eastern Europe are experiencing specific challenges, on the economic as well as on the demographic level, with bad accessibility, old infrastructures, urban poverty, brain drain, lack of administrative capacity and financing for public services (housing, transport, schools, health services), corruption as well as lack of public and private investments.

The need for specific actions furthering the implementation of Cities and Metropolitan Regions nationally and transnationally in the governance of the EU macro-region as well as enhancing their capacities through cooperation is reflected in the 2011 EUSDR Action Plan¹, especially for the transversal Priority Area 10 (“To step up institutional capacity and cooperation”).

In 2013, the Urban Platform Danube Region (UPDR) was promoted by Priority Area 10 in cooperation with the Danube Council of Cities and Regions (CoDCR) and the Cities of Vienna and Ulm. The UPDR was first presented at the 2nd EUSDR Annual Forum in Bucharest. The platform, coordinated by PA 10, has been organising yearly stakeholder conferences and seminars on relevant urban topics in cooperation with relevant institutions and networks, promoting transnational cooperation and furthering the implementation of strategic projects. The UPDR was strongly present in the last EUSDR Annual Fora with Workshops and project presentations, and represents the interests of the Danube Cities in two EuroCities Fora (EU Urban Agenda, Roma Inclusion) and at DG Regional and Urban Affairs meetings.

¹ SEC(2010) 1489 final: Action Plan for the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52010SC1489>



In 2014, the platform's website went online at the 3rd Annual Forum in Vienna, combined in 2015 with Facebook. The online platform was designed as a pilot project of PA 10 to further information and cooperation, peer to peer learning, and project development. PA 10-UPDR has fostered several strategic EUSDR projects on urban issues.

The Urban Platform Danube Region of Priority Area 10 has become an open platform with almost 80 members, representing cities, city networks and associations as well as experts from all the partner countries of the EUSDR. It has, in a number of official and public statements, expressed the challenges and the needs of the Danube Region Cities, not least in the EU Urban Agenda.

With the end of the financing of the pilot project through the Cities of Vienna and Ulm in 2015/16, and taking into account the developments of the last two years concerning the European Urban Agenda and the roll out of the EUSDR, PA 10 presents a revised concept to improve the capacity of local administrations to share information and know-how in order to support cooperation on cross cutting issues in the Danube Region.

Recent policy developments at European and EUSDR Level

- The European Institutions have developed a comprehensive political agenda for the urban development in Europe which supports an integrated approach to a complex matter, culminating 2015 in the Amsterdam Pact and the EU-Urban Agenda².
- Since 2014, the regulations for the ESI-funds have introduced the mainstreaming of the urban dimension in cohesion policy³. It is also expected that macro-regional strategies are supported by national and regional programmes. And even if the developments are slow, not least due to the lacking capacities of the Danube Region, first results can be seen in the stronger participation of Danube Cities in programmes of the EU, reflecting an increased awareness at national and regional level of the crucial importance of involving cities and metropolitan areas

² Urban Agenda: http://urbanagendaforthe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Pact-of-Amsterdam_v7_WEB.pdf

³ See Article 7 of the Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1301>)



in a multi-level governance structure for the implementation of regional and local planning and funding.

- From 2014/15 on, the programmes JESSICA, URBAN, URBACT III, INTERREG Europe, Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) and ESPON as well as ESF funding targeted at urban development⁴ and the spreading of CLLD (Community led local development) have, after a slow start without exclusive EU-funding for the macro-region, helped a number of cities in the Danube Region to exchange knowledge and develop cooperation.
- In the past two years, PA 10 and EuroVienna have developed the pilot project EuroAccess Danube Region database. The website is online since spring 2016 and takes over one of the tasks of the UPDR's website, namely sharing EU-Programme calls and funding sources and providing project partners for cities.
- The CoDCR (Committee of the Regions) has introduced a massive online course (MOOC) with a focus on accessing EU funds, understanding budgets and developing projects that started in October 2016.
- EuroCities has established a transversal "Urban Cooperation Platform", of which PA10/City of Vienna is member, giving us the possibility of representing the specific needs of the Danube Region Cities.
- The website of the EU-Urban Agenda (urbanagendaforthe.eu/) offers several digital platforms helping cities to gather and compare data, find project partners and specific funding.
- Last but not least, in 2016 the City of Vienna launched the "CapaCities" project, which finances up to eight workshops every year dedicated to furthering smart city projects in cities of the Danube Region and the Western Balkan.

⁴ EU member states are recommended to identify synergies between ESF and ERDF to support measures under integrated strategies such as the integrated sustainable urban development strategy. (see DG Regio: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/brochures/2014/integrated-sustainable-urban-development)



This shows that there are a number of new initiatives in place at EU level, aimed at achieving urban and territorial cohesion through the implementation of integrated and transnational or macro-regional approaches, where cities of the EUSDR can gather information, exchange knowledge, access to funding and participate in projects.

However, it is still true, and especially in the Danube Region, that “EU urban policies need more effective coordination of different policies, actors and planning mechanisms, more sharing of territorial knowledge, more multi-level governance arrangements and greater integration of place-based approaches into the public policies at EU, national, regional and local level” (ESPON Report 2012).

The future activities of the Urban Platform Danube Region

Urban governance needs the implementation of civil society and local actors as stakeholders for the development of sustainable competences and competitiveness in central urban intervention areas like planning, cooperation, and project development, especially in those cities where the administrative capacity and economic situation is weak and the political situation unstable, which is the case in many cities in the Danube Region.

Therefore, PA 10 will continue to work towards the strengthening of Danube Cities institutional and administrative capacities, especially with a view to participative governance, institutional memory and open government which are essential for a stable and sustainable administration and governance at all levels.

It will do this:

- on the one hand in cooperation with the D-LAP, the Danube Local Actors Platform which brings together relevant local stakeholders of the EUSDR, namely Civil Society Organizations, local administrations and academia as well as relevant international and transnational institutions or projects;
- on the other hand through specific pilot projects, conferences and seminars targeted at common problems and challenges of Danube Cities that have been identified like administrative capacity building, social housing or open government;
- through documenting and publishing all results on the website of EUSDR PA10.



PA 10 supports project development and implementation of local actors – amongst others – within the following UPDR projects:

- The cooperation between PA 10 and BACID.eu on the Governance Forum for the coordination of administrative capacity building measures in the Danube Region and the Western Balkan which was started at the UPDR-Conference in Vienna in June 2016.⁵
- The preparation of a project furthering the coordinated introduction of and exchange of know-how on cadastre and land register in the Danube Region, following a first preparatory seminar in Vienna in October 2016.
- The preparation of comprehensive online guidelines for sound local and regional governance, describing legal statute, legal and factual competences and tasks as well as financial regulations of territorial entity.

This Paper has been presented at the 11th Steering Group Meeting in Bucharest in November 2016.

⁵ Governance Forum: http://www.bacid.eu/Governance_Forum