



Participation Days Consolidated paper 2014 – 2017

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Introduction

The Participation Days event format was established in 2014 in order to enable the international civil society and local actors from the 14 EUSDR countries to meet, exchange views and perceptions amongst each other and to meet and discuss in-depth with EU and national decision makers.

The Participation Day events thus contribute to the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

The annual Danube Participation Days (DPD) are organized by Priority Area 10 *Institutional Capacity and Cooperation* (PA10) in cooperation with the Danube Civil Society Forum (DCSF) in order to provide civil society and local actors with opportunities to connect and get involved in the implementation of the EUSDR.

PA10 and DCSF also support the organization of National Participation Day (NPD) events in the different Danube Region countries. The NPD serves as a forum for stakeholders to contribute and share their work, experience, perspective and plans on both state and non-state level, for mutual information and opinion building on national level.

Since 2014, 3 Danube Participation Days and numerous National Participation Days were held in various countries of the Danube Region. A total of over 700 participants demonstrate a great public interest.

In May 2017, the Participation Day events were reviewed by means of an online questionnaire. The results were published in the Participation Day Review, which is available for download on the PA10 website.¹

In June 2017, the present consolidated paper was compiled to give a comprehensive overview of the past Participation Day events.

Danube Participation Days

The DPD event format was designed to attract attendees from all the countries of the Danube Region and were intended to be implemented on a yearly basis. Thus, between the establishment of the DPD in 2014 and June 2017, 3 DPDs were held in three different countries of the Danube Region.

¹ <https://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/participation-day>



DPD 1 Eisenstadt, Austria (25.6.2014)

The first DPD in Eisenstadt enabled its participants from the international civil society and local actors from the 14 EUSDR countries to get active and involved in the implementation of the EUSDR with the help of a set of 3 elements:

- Opening session including focused key notes
- 4 thematic *village meetings* in separate rooms (with key-note speakers moving from village to village every 30-45 minutes to enable in-depth-exchange of views)
- Closing plenary reports from the *villages*

During this DPD, a common space between these villages hosted presentations of NGOs, cities, networks, projects ideas, etc. This open space in form of a café provided opportunities to meet and discuss. At the same time, face to face meetings between the participants were facilitated.

The DPD was held as a stakeholder conference of PA 9 *Investing in People and Skills* and PA 10 *Institutional Capacity and Cooperation* within the EUSDR. The event also brought together participants of the Danube River Show Project and stakeholders and local actors from civil society, the cultural sector, the youth sectors, local authorities as well as academia.

More than 140 participants from all parts of the Danube region took part in the event, including representatives of local authorities from cities in the Danube region, and NGOs from 14 EUSDR countries of NGO Networks (DCSF, DaNet, Rede Social Romania, Danube Environmental Forum, Danube Networkers, Danube Strategy Research Network DSRN, Young Citizens Danube Network YCDN), the cultural sector (artists, museums, Danube Cultural Cluster, representatives of festivals etc.) and the youth sector (national and local agencies, NGOs, schools, higher and dual education, second-chance education etc.). As a side event, a joint working group meeting of PA9/WG6 & PA10/WG1 on migration management at the local level was held on June 24th and in the morning of June 25th.

The Eisenstadt Declaration on Participation in the Danube Region and the reports and documents produced by the four villages were published as a follow-up to the 1st DPD in Eisenstadt. The declaration and the main findings of the DPD were discussed in one of the workshops at the 3rd Annual Forum of the EUSDRD in Vienna.

Links:

- <http://www.foster-europe.org/de/node/20>
- <http://dcsf.danubestrategy.eu/danube-participation-days/1st-danube-participation-day>

Annexes:

- Programme and agenda
- Summary
- Declaration on Participation in the Danube Region
- Reports produced by the four villages:
 - o Village report Civil Society
 - o Village report Culture
 - o Village report Local Administration
 - o Village report Youth



DPD 2 Ulm, Germany (28.10.2015)

The second DPD was held in Ulm, Germany as a side event to the 4th Annual Forum of the EUSDR. The topic was “Shared History – Common Future”. The event was organised by the Institute for virtual and face-to-face learning in adult education (ILEU) at Ulm University in close cooperation with a Steering Committee consisting of representatives of the Danube Civil Society Forum (DCSF), the Priority Area 10 of the EUSDR and Agapedia Ltd.

Gisela Erler (State Counsellor for Civil Society and Civic Participation of the State Government Baden-Württemberg) and Stefan August Lütgenau (President of Danube Civil Society Forum) open the event with an analysis of civil society and its role within the Danube Region countries as a greenhouse for creating and developing human capital outside the state institutions.

Jan W. van Deth (Professor of Political Science and International Comparative Social Research, Mannheim University) presented empirical studies on civil society in South-East Europe. As democracy and civil society are mutually enforcing mechanisms, in an ill-functioning democracy civil society also cannot fulfil its function. Mr. van Deth stressed that the focus in South-East Europe should be on supporting grass-root organisations to promote democratization.

Roberts Kīlis (Associate professor, Stockholm School of Economics in Riga) provided some lessons from the creation of the Long term strategy Latvia 2030 during 2007-2010 from a citizens’ participation point. The strategy has been developed as a deliberative process through the inclusion of citizens in regional forum discussions, online participation, involvement of youth and pupils, surveys.

In the more interactive part of the event working groups were formed where participants could discuss the topics social entrepreneurship, participation and governance, lifelong learning for individual benefit and social participation, financing, open data, participation and civil society and Ukraine, media, small towns and cultural landscapes, Roma and vulnerable groups, Danube Social Service & Education Cluster, youth and migration.

Most of the working groups highlighted that the discussions were fruitful and that the members were able to establish possible solutions or recommendations.

Kurt Puchinger (Priority Area Coordinator, Priority Area 10 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region) and Gisela Erler (State Counsellor for Civil Society and Civic Participation of the State Government Baden-Württemberg) delivered the closing remarks and concluded that civil society involvement and its interface with governmental institutions is what fosters social cohesion, which is necessary for economic and territorial cohesion.

Links:

- <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/4th-annual-forum-of-eusdr-ulm-2015>

Annexes:

- Summary
- Working-Groups reports



DPD 3 Bratislava, Slovakia (2.-3-11.2016)

The 3rd Danube Participation Day was held in Bratislava, Slovakia. The event aimed at encouraging stronger involvement of civil society and local actors of the 14 EUSDR countries in the implementation of the EUSDR.

The first day was hosted by the Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development in Slovakia, EUSDR- PA10, DCSF, LADDER and Foster Europe. The general theme was sustainable development, as an issue of participative multi-level governance in the Danube Region and within macro-regional strategies.

Anders Bergström (EUSBR), Daniela Urschitz (EUSDR- PA10), Martin Gierl (Plenipotentiary of the government of Slovakia) and Stefan Lütgenau (Foster Europe/ DCSF) opened the first day. In his opening speech Stefan Lütgenau (DCSF) underlined the importance of participation and cooperation of local actors, civil society in a multi-level and multi sectoral framework to shift to a sustainable development in Europe and its neighbouring regions.

After various presentations about sustainable development in politics and society by the keynote speakers Gisela Eler, the State Counsellor for Civil Society and Civic Participation in Baden Württemberg; Franz Fischler, the President of the European Forum Alpach in Austria and Irene Lucius of WWF Danube – Carpathian Program in Austria, the participants were given the opportunity to cooperate in six different workshops. The workshops dealt with open government partnership, energy and environment, social innovation, impact of consumer and producer behaviour, DEAR- turning local Ideas into global studies and infrastructure and participation. The results of the workshops were presented in the afternoon. A welcome reception and dinner was hosted by the mayor of the city of Bratislava.

The second day focused on the role of potential of local actors in making sustainable development in the Danube Region possible. Hosting organisations were the Council of Danube Cities and Regions and the City of Bratislava.

The 3rd Participation Day welcomed more than 180 participants from the 14 EUSDR countries and provided a platform for debate, questions, opinion building, exchange and cooperation for actors from civil society, municipalities, EU and national agencies in the Danube Region.

Links:

- <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/news/3rd-participation-day-in-bratislava>
- <http://dcsf.danubestrategy.eu/pd3/reports-working-groups-0>

Annexes:

- Programme
- Workshop Recommendations Summary



National Participation Days

NPDs, also sometimes referred to as national hearings, are organized by or with the participation of EUSDR national coordinators and Priority Area Coordinators and held at a national level in addition and to complement the DPDs. Their main aim is to establish and connect Civil Society Organisations, social partners and local actors as relevant stakeholders in the national governance at all levels. The NPDs also target a better communication of EUSDR aims and activities and provide information and feedback for the DPD and the Annual Forum of the EUSDR.

Annexes: NPD Manual

NPD Ukraine (22.4.2014)

The NPD Ukraine 2014 was organised by the Centre for Regional Studies, Odessa, Danube Civil Society Forum Ukrainian Network and the Odessa Regional Council. The event was implemented with the financial support from the European Union through the project “Strengthening Civil Society Involvement in Assisting the Government with the Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region”.

Keynote speakers included Vyacheslav Negoda from the Ministry of Regional Development, Myhaylo Smushkovich as head of the Odessa Regional Council, and Stefan August Lütgenau, President of the Danube Civil Society Forum, Director of Foster Europe, amongst others.

Within the framework of this NPD, the current state of Ukraine’s involvement in the EUSDR implementation was discussed intensively.

Annexes:

- NPD Ukraine 2014 Agenda
-

NPD Austria (13.5.2015)

The first Austrian National Participation Day was held in Vienna in 2015. Keynote speakers included Werner Almhofer from the Austrian Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, Roland Arbter from the Austrian Federal Chancellery, Gudrun Maiergrugger from viadonau, Roland Hanak from the Austrian Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Martina Hartl from the Austrian Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, amongst others.

A total of about 40 participants attended the event.

Annexes:

- NPD Austria 2015 Agenda incl. presentation (German)



NPD Serbia (20.10.2015)

The NPD Serbia 2015 was held in Novi Sad. The event focused on the status quo and the outlook of EUSDR implementation in Serbia. National, regional and local Serbian authorities provided short reports from the field regarding their involvement in the EUSDR and regarding ongoing projects. Serbia's involvement in the DTP was also a topic of discussion.

Annexes:

- NPD Serbia 2015 Agenda
-

NPD Bulgaria (17.-18.3.2016)

The first Bulgarian NPD was organised by the Citizen Participation Forum in Sofia in 2016 under the motto "the change around us starts with changing ourselves". About 90 representatives of Bulgarian NGOs and DSCF members participated. The NPD featured success stories and lessons learned by citizen organisations and public bodies presented by keynote speakers such as Daniela Bozhinova from the Bulgarian Association for the Promotion of Citizens' Initiatives.

Annexes:

- NPD Bulgaria 2016 Agenda
-

NPD Austria (9.9.2016)

The second Austrian NPD was held in Tulln, Lower Austria, in 2016. The topics discussed included innovative cooperation in the Danube Region and Austrian NGOs' and local actors' perspectives on the implementation of the EUSDR. A large part of the event was dedicated to the presentation and exchange of good practices for cooperation projects and their contribution to the EUSDR.

Annexes:

- NPD Austria 2016 Agenda (German)
-

NPD Moldova (22.9.2016)

The first Moldovan NPD was organized by the NGO BIOS in Chisinau in 2016. Keynote speakers included the EUSDR National Coordinator Anatol Usatii, Henno Putnik from the European Union Delegation to Moldova, and Valentin Ciubotaru, director of the NGO BIOS, amongst others.

More than participants attended this NPD. The national authorities were represented by the vice-minister of Regional Development and Construction and by some members of the inter-ministerial Group for Implementation of EUSDR, the international community was represented amongst others by representatives of the EU delegation in the Republic of Moldova, the Ambassador of Slovakia, representatives of the German Embassy as well as foreign experts working in Moldova.



A wide range of subjects were addressed during the Participation Day, including:

- the role of Civil Society, Local Actors and Cities in the Governance of the Strategy and its Member Countries,
- the State of Implementation, Challenges and Opportunities of EUSDR implementation in the Republic of Moldova
- increasing Efficiency in Education for people in the Danube Region,
- experience of the network for business women in the Danube countries in framework of EUSDR,
- transboundary cooperation and knowledge transfer,
- experience, challenges and opportunities regarding fostering Ukraine's involvement in the EUSDR implementation
- ecological problems of the Danube River and Nistru and Prut Rivers as well as adjacent areas, the problems in agriculture and general economy of the Danube region in general and of the Republic of Moldova in particular.

Among the most highly appreciated solutions to the multiple problems of the region the following may be mentioned: informational support for any initiative for the development of the region, a constructive dialogue and sharing of opinions and experience regarding existing good practices and models, active fund-raising strategies involving the business community and citizens, communication and learning.

Annexes:

- NPD Moldova 2016 Agenda, invitation, evaluation and summary

[NPD Slovakia \(21.10.2016\)](#)

The first Slovakian NPD was held in Bratislava in 2016. Its target was to present the EUSDR, its importance for Slovakia, which institutions and persons are responsible for the strategy and its priority areas in Slovakia and how it could be useful to different types of organisations. The NPD was also used to advertise the upcoming DPD in Slovakia.

Mr. František Koločány from the Government Office of the Slovak Republic introduced the functional process and the responsibility of the Government Office as the national coordinator of the Danube Strategy in Slovakia. Representatives of three priority areas (Mrs. Andrea Vranovská for P.A.4 Water Quality, Mr. Štefan Chudoba for P.A.7 Knowledge society, Mrs. Lucia Auxtová and Mrs. Drahuša Kalmanová for P.A.9 People and Skills) presented their priority areas and opportunities for NGOs to become engaged in the Strategy's implementation. The final section was devoted to the options for financing these activities.

The workshop was attended by 40 participants from public administration and civil society.

Annexes:

- NPD Slovakia 2016 Summary



NPD Serbia (24.3.2017)

The second NPD in Serbia was held in Novi Sad in the great hall of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Over 90 representatives of local governments, civil society organizations, public administrations, universities, private companies, public companies and representatives of EU organizations responsible for the implementation of the Danube Strategy in 14 European and non-European countries attended the event.

The NPD provided information on funding opportunities for cross-border and transnational cooperation and presented innovative examples of cooperation ranging from water protection in Vojvodina to food safety in supply chains in the Danube Region. Furthermore, the event offered the opportunity to exchange know-how and experience between public and private stakeholders and to network for future cooperation.

Links:

- <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/news/fostering-cooperation-eusdr-national-hearing-in-serbia>

Annexes:

- NPD Serbia 2017 Agenda

NPD Bulgaria (16.5.2017)

The second National Participation Day in Bulgaria took place in Sofia on the 16th and 17th of May 2017. The Citizen Participation Forum now organised this NPD titled *The Art of Cooperation*.

Interactive exercises and discussions outlined common goals and chances for exercising impact. Keynote speakers included Iva Taralezhkova from the Citizen Participation Forum, Daniela Urschitz from PA10, and Angela Rodel from the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange Fulbright who led a discussion session on *networks and values*. In an interactive exercise, the participants were confronted with the question "What connects us?" A special slot was devoted to *Citizen Dialogues*, where representatives of national and local authorities took part and discussed effective ways of public dialogue and partnership with the civil society.

The two-day event was attended by about 70 civil society organisations from Austria, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania.

Links:

- <https://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/news/the-art-of-cooperation-2nd-national-participation-day-in-bulgaria>
- <http://www.fgu.bg/en/national-participation-day-sofia-art-connecting/>

Annexes:

- NPD Bulgaria 2017 Agenda



NPD Czech Republic (30.5.2017)

The first NPD in the Czech Republic was organized by the Ministry of Regional Development in the Czech Republic in Prague at the Academy of Public Investment. The NPD focused on a participatory approach.

Keynote speakers included Olga Letáčková, Deputy minister and Miluše Horská, Vice-President of the Senate of the Parliament. Simona Fink, co-ordinator of Interreg Bayern-Czech CBC introduced participants with funding opportunities for Czech organisations, and different Czech organisations presented their projects.

Annexes:

- NPD Czech Republic 2017 Agenda
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Outlook on future Participation Days

In addition to the 4th Danube Participation Day on October 17th 2017 in Budapest, Hungary, numerous National Participation Day events are being planned at the time of writing. Information concerning these future events can be found on the PA10 website (www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu).



List of annexes

1. DPD 1 Austria 2014 Programme and agenda, summary, Declaration on Participation in the Danube Region, reports produced by the four villages:
 - Village report Civil Society
 - Village report Culture
 - Village report Local Administration
 - Village report Youth
2. DPD 2 Germany 2015: Summary, Working-Groups reports
3. DPD 3 Slovakia 2016 Programme, Workshop Recommendations Summary
4. NPD Manual
5. NPD Ukraine 2014 Agenda
6. NPD Austria 2015 Agenda incl. presentation (German)
7. NPD Serbia 2015 Agenda
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9. NPD Austria 2016 Agenda (German)
10. NPD Moldova 2016 Agenda, invitation, evaluation and summary
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12. NPD Serbia 2017 Agenda
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14. NPD Czech Republic 2017 Agenda