

## Zagreb-Danube Financing Dialogue

### Opening of the Exhibition

Kp draft Version 01, 22-03

Dear honourable hosts and supporters, dear Croatian friends.

Dear honourable project owners, dear honourable guests at the opening of our 4<sup>th</sup> DFD and the exhibition of projects, which are an essential element in bringing the EUSDR to the ground; thank you for joining us and thank you for all the efforts which have been made in preparing this event and making it a success.

DFD is about accelerating small project implementation within the framework of EUSDR by merging excellent partners from the European and local financing sector and project owners and it is about information how to approach the different options provided by Funds, Programs and Financing Institutions; many thanks for the contributions of lecturers and participants from the financing sector and the EC which strongly supports the DFD from its very beginning as a pilot project financed by technical assistance money of the European Parliament.

It is an honour for me to open the exhibition on behalf of PA 10, which is managed jointly by the City of Vienna, represented by myself and Slovenia, represented by my colleague Irena Lukač as operating manager in the Centre of Excellence in Finance, Ljubljana.

*The EUSDR started in 2011 with a piece of paper, a Communication of the EC, and four years later there is a working structure established which directly influences the activities of governments, parliaments, local authorities, local governments, administrations, funding and financing institutions, stakeholders of the scientific and business community, social partners and civil society organisations, overall some thousand active stakeholders, opinion leaders and multipliers involved in the implementation of this macro-regional development policy procedure.*

*This is fascinating especially if you think about the dimension of the Region and the challenges we are facing in a conglomerate of old Member-states, new Member-states, candidate countries and neighbours including app 115 Mio people living under extremely different socio-economic conditions, but devoted to a prosperous, social secure and promising perspective of future living in the Region.*

*People who have not been talking together since centuries are now thinking about co-operative projects, common interests and create new initiatives already beyond the original Action Plan.*

A regional development strategy and especially a Macro-regional Strategy without projects is like the Croatian kitchen without garlic, nearly unimaginable.

Project development and project implementation does not take place in a vacuum it is surrounded by all elements of political and socio-economic reality as well as by the civil society and successful project implementation needs much more than pure technical assistance or financial support, it needs an overall future oriented climate which facilitates optimism and trust and some sort of stability and social balance.

The EUSDR is supporting the improvement of those framework-conditions as well as transnational cooperation in seeking and offering synergies between the manifold stakeholders in the 14 participating states in the Strategy.

Croatia has developed an ambitious operational program for the new period under the title *“Competitiveness and Cohesion”*, which aims to boost economic competitiveness, support alignment with the EU environmental acquis and invest in transport infrastructure and network infrastructure. (The EU allocation amounts to EUR 6.88 billion)

*Almost 60% of the ERDF allocation is aimed at strengthening the economic competitiveness of the country. It will support national efforts to develop an innovation-driven economy, primarily by building-up scientific excellence, encouraging Research/Development/Innovation investment and technology transfer in the business sector. Competitiveness and innovation in Small and Medium sized Enterprises will be supported through increased entrepreneurship, better access to finance and the development of high-quality business services.*

*In the transport sector, ERDF and the Cohesion Fund will strengthen the connectivity of the country and the regions to trans-European networks (railway, inland waterway and roads) and develop sustainable urban mobility in major cities, as well as improve road safety.*

*Urban sustainable development will be implemented through integrated territorial investments and the use of financial instruments supporting SMEs is envisaged.*

*These objectives are not only promising but fully consistent with the objectives of the EUSDR and there is a huge potential for project promotion at the interface between this national program and the transnational ambitions of the EUSDR.*

*So Zagreb is a good place for us to talk about projects and project implementation and we are all now very curious to hear more details about the projects which will be presented to us.*