

The Council of Danube Cities and Regions and the Urban Platform Danube Region Joint Statement

If the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) is to be successful, the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy must be reached and the resources of the new multiannual financial framework must be put to use, especially in urban and metropolitan regions of the Danube Region. Therefore, similarly to the Baltic Metropolises Network (BaltMet) in the Baltic Sea macro-region, the establishment of a metropolitan network is included in the EUSDR Action Plan proposed by the European Commission on 8 December 2010.

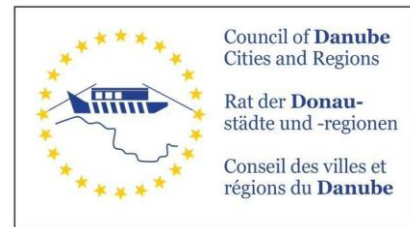
The Danube Region is a European macro-region with a considerable density of cities (many of them capital cities) and metropolitan areas. However, its initial historical, economical and geographical situation differs widely from the Baltic Sea Region. In order to form the Urban Platform Danube Region (UPDR), an initiative that represents the urban, diverse and polycentric reality of the Danube Region must take into account the manifold networks which are already active in the framework of various topics along a variety of geographical or political axes in the Region. In addition to this, it must consider the city associations of the Danube Region countries and metropolitan regions.

Despite the many existing European, international, transnational and national networks and transnational projects, the dissemination of information and experiences as well as the communication, exchange and cooperation in the Danube Region is still developing, especially where the interaction between different, often conflicting levels – national, political, administrative, business and civil society – are concerned.

The Council of Danube Cities and Regions (CoDCR) was founded in 2011 during the first steps for the adoption of the EUSDR. It is the main inter-municipal and interregional network on the political level which fosters macro-regional cooperation in the Danube Region. With its current political Head Office in Ulm, the CoDCR is a bridge that links European, regional and local institutions to the academic, business, financing networks and other representatives of the civil society. The UPDR brings the CoDCR to the administrative level and widens it to the macro-regional scope of the EUSDR. Together with the UPDR, the CoDCR aims at strengthening and improving synergies, bolstering the exchange of information and the development of joint projects, as well as making the Danube Cities and Regions a strong stakeholder within the Strategy and on the European level.

The UPDR underpins the CoDCR and will thereby support the interests of cities in the Danube Region, support the EUSDR and the European Commission in the context of multi-level governance and serve as a strategic partner to the national governments for the implementation of the EUSDR.

The efficiency of the UPDR will be strengthened through a top-down approach by the CoDCR, City Networks and City Associations in the Danube Region countries. Bottom-up projects should develop from cooperation with the Danube Civil Society Platform, civil-society associations and city administrations as well as other EUSDR stakeholders.



One central element of the Platform will be the UPDR website, where members can exchange best-practice models, disseminate information on work in other city networks, on conferences and seminars, research results and the development of the EUSDR, especially with regard to national, regional and transnational or bilateral promotion opportunities for cities and city networks within the context of the multiannual financial framework of the EU. The UPDR and the Danube Civil Society Platform websites will be linked to each other in order to foster relevant information between organizations of the civil society and cities and to develop joint projects.

The strategies and topics of the UPDR will be related to the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy and to the Priority Areas of the EUSDR. Three main thematic channels – the Sustainable City, the Inclusive City and the Smart City – will be subdivided in specific topics, which will be actively developed by “thematic leaders”. Thematic leaders are those Cities, Regions, City Associations or Networks which wish to present a specific topic in which they are interested or which they are implementing. They should invite other interested members to cooperate and interact on the platform and in seminars or conferences as well as to develop common projects and project ideas.

Conferences and seminars will be individually organized and financed by thematic leaders, cities, regions, networks and institutions. Through the UPDR, thematic leaders can rely on a much larger pool of participants and response, as well as improved sustainability.

A further focus of the UPDR will be to present information on joint decisions, advisory opinions, declarations, studies from EU institutions and international as well as national organizations on topics relevant to urban development. Moreover, the UDPR will provide the opportunity for cities and city associations in the Danube Region to develop and implement their own advisory opinions or declarations through the UPDR and the CoDCR.

The administrative office of the UPDR is situated in Vienna and currently managed jointly by Priority Area 10 “Institutional Capacity and Cooperation” of the EUSDR and the CoDCR. It is financed by the Cities of Ulm and Vienna.