

3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Forum of the EUSDR

## The Urban Agenda in the Danube Region

### Growing Together on the Urban Platform

<b>Workshop summary</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>27.06.2014</b>		
<b>From:</b>	9:50	<b>Until:</b>	10:50
<b>Place:</b>	Vienna City Hall		
<b>Facilitation</b>	<b>Alexandra Schantl</b> , KDZ - Zentrum für Verwaltungsforschung		
<b>Panel - Speakers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Madeleine Hahovsky</b> – Deputy head of unit DG Regio, Competence Centre for inclusive growth, urban and territorial development</li> <li>• <b>Stefan Gänzle</b> – Associate Professor Department of Political Science and Management, University of Agder, Norway</li> <li>• <b>Peter Langer</b> - General Coordinator of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions</li> <li>• <b>Milan Ftáčnik</b>, Mayor of Bratislava</li> <li>• <b>Milan Gajsek</b>, City of Ljubljana</li> </ul>		
<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>40</b>		

## 1. Focus of the Session

Presentation and discussion of the interactions between two new strategies of the European Union in the context of the upcoming EU-funding period:

1. macro regions
2. urban policies

The added value of cooperation between cities and regions in macro regions: lessons learnt, strategies for the future of the EUSDR

## 2. Main Messages of the Speakers

**Madeleine Mahovsky**, deputy head of unit DG Regio

***“Are urban issues sufficiently reflected in political priorities, policy coordination and governance structures?”***

At EU level there is lack of coordination of policies with urban dimension, therefore an urban agenda is needed, which was confirmed at the latest event, “Cities of tomorrow investing together” (02.2014). The event addressed following questions: “Why do we need an agenda? What agenda and in which form?”. We DO need an urban agenda, we need EU-policy orientated towards cities. This can be done by collecting wisdom of various processes on different issues with different actors and different interests, e.g. between the Committee of the Regions and UN habitat. The Commission will soon adopt a Communication, followed by a public consultation, which will be opened from mid-July to 26<sup>th</sup> of September. Participants are strongly invited to participate in this public consultation, which will be followed by a consultation of the EU Parliament.

The main issue is that EU policies are formulated in a very sectorial way: an integrated approach is needed at EU-level. Cities do have such integrated approach in their own urban policies, but the interaction with the EU level is partly missing: a one-stop-shop on EU-policy making is needed.

Cities can make their voice heard in the bigger EU context and speak with one voice by joining e.g. the new Urban platform of the Danube Region.

The question on the risk of an urban-rural divide is recurrent. In reality we work with functional areas: Rural and urban areas need each other, supporting one area generates benefits for the other.

**Stefan Gänzle**, University of Agder, Norway

Several questions can be addressed when developing an urban platform: Whom to involve? How? Which questions to tackle? Stefan Gänzle shared experiences from the “Turku process”, a cooperation between cities in the Baltic Sea Region:

The development and branding success story of the city of Turku (south-west Finland) was built within the “Turku process”, in which also Hamburg and St Petersburg were involved, as well as a variety of organisations. Within the process, partners managed to concentrate cooperation on 4 key-topics, and the process was recognised as a flagship in the Baltic Sea Strategy. Indeed, in the Baltic Sea Region cooperation takes place between EU member States and one non-EU country, Russia. The neighbourhood dimension is a success factor of the Turku process and has always been kept throughout time, notwithstanding the political situation.

**Peter Langer**, General Coordinator of the Council of Danube Cities and Regions (CODCR)

The CODCR was established through a long process, started in 2003 by 7-8 cities located along the Danube. The organisation now counts over 40 participants and is integrated as key-partner in the EUSDR. The CODCR has a role in communicating on various issues relevant to the EUSDR. A river show is underway, with stops in various countries, which aims at informing citizens and stakeholders in the cities. The next step will be the promotion of the urban platform.

### **Presentation of the Urban Platform of the EUSDR**

The website of the Urban Platform of the EUSDR was launched a few days before the Annual Forum and is accessible at: [www.updr.eu](http://www.updr.eu). It was presented by the Urban Platform team, composed by Daniela Urschitz, Jörg Mirtl, Peter Langer and Birgit Ginzler. All participants were invited to visit the website, which enables cities to establish a profile, share information, photos and documents, exchange on projects with other cities. Several interactive tools are available such as a contact form, a comment function, a search tool. The website also provides useful links and a newsfeed.

**Milan Ftáčnik**, Mayor of Bratislava

Mr Ftáčnik shared the experience of the capital City of Bratislava, one of the founding members of the urban Platform of the EUSDR.

The urban dimension needs to be addressed concretely, and while there is broad agreement on the need for an EU urban agenda, the content and methods are still to be defined. The threefold

approach around the topics “smart city”, “sustainable city” and “inclusive city”, which are the core topics of the EUSDR Urban Platform, could be followed.

The earmarking of Structural Funds to urban policies, as posed by the new EU funding period, is a great success for cities, but it rings along certain challenges as well. Data is needed on cities’ achievements, on citizens’ participation, etc. This basic research is currently being conducted in Slovakia and should be ready by the beginning of 2015.

For Slovakia, the main topic is the integrated approach in functional areas between cities and rural areas: Which decisions and how can they be taken? How can cities and rural areas cooperate on such functional areas, when their competences are limited to their own territory? This new approach will force to develop the functional territory concept.

It is essential to address all levels, from local to European, in the urban agenda. There are organisations linking the many cities of Europe and EU institutions, such as the Committee of the Regions and Eurocities. The Urban Platform of the EUSDR is offering a great framework to speak with one voice. Cities are leaders of development and have a key role to play in the EU and in the EUSDR, complementary to states and regions.

**Milan Gajsek**, thematic leader at the City of Ljubljana

Europe belongs to its cities and vice-versa, it is essential that Cities know what the Urban agenda is.

A network of cities, incl. capital cities is needed, so that cities can e.g. inform each other about their projects. Ljubljana is grateful for the Urban Platform of the EUSDR and to be able to share their experience with other cities on various topics. For instance the upcoming project for a railroad terminal, which will be built as a public-private partnership, with support from the ERDF (160M€ and 900 jobs expected to be generated). This example shows that cooperation is essential in the Danube Region, as funding is not available to finance all corridor projects.