

Danube Region

Guidance Paper for Youth Participation

- Draft -

Draft version: October 2020

Editors' Group:

Claudia Singer	EUSDR Priority Area 10 "Institutional Capacity and Cooperation"
Stefan August Lütgenau	Danube Civil Society Forum/Foster Europe
Stefan Barth	Agapedia Foundation
Iryna Gumenchuk	Agapedia Foundation/Danube Youth Network
Matthias Holzner	States Ministry Baden-Württemberg

<https://capacitycooperation.danube-region.eu/>

Disclaimer:

This publication was developed with the assistance of the Danube Transnational Programme/European Union.

The document does not represent the point of view of the European Union. Priority Area 10 Coordination (PAC 10) of the EU Strategy of the Danube Region (EUSDR), the Danube Transnational Programme or the European Union cannot be held responsible for further use/reuse of this publication.

The present document is a draft version and subject to further change.

A short development history of the Guidance Paper for Youth Participation

The revised Action Plan of the EU Danube Strategy aims at improving the quality of life for the inhabitants of the Danube Region. In doing so, the strategy defines the strong involvement of civil society and youth as a strategic objective. Against this background, the 6th Danube Participation Day in Bucharest (that was held back-to-back with the 8th EUSDR Annual Forum) marked the starting point to discuss the rejuvenation of the EU Danube Strategy. The results of the 6th Danube Participation Day provided the basis for the draft of the Guidance Paper for Youth Participation.

Representatives from youth networks, civil society organisations, public authorities, research, and the EUSDR Governance contributed to the draft Guidance Paper through a multistage consultation process. The current state of play of the Guidance Paper will be presented and discussed at the 7th Danube Participation Day. The results of the 7th Danube Participation Day will be integrated in the subsequent finalisation of the Guidance Paper for Youth Participation.

Introduction

The *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* aims at launching a fruitful and forward-looking discussion among the broad intergenerational arena of decision-makers, practitioners, civil society, and academia on how to better integrate the youth perspectives into the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

The *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* focuses on the integration of youth in the development of the Danube Region and, thereby, seeks to contribute to the rejuvenation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region through diversification of stakeholders.

Against this background, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* aims at serving two purposes:

- (1) Providing guidance to youth initiatives and young people to pro-actively shape development in the Danube Region (by making use of the Macro-regional Strategy);
- (2) Starting a discussion in the EUSDR Governance and beyond on a long-term, sustainable perspective for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

Hence, the *Guidance Paper on Youth Participation* is designed to shed light on

- NEEDS of young people and youth initiatives to engage in developing the Danube Region;
- POTENTIALS of young people and youth initiatives to participate in shaping the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and its implementation;
- BENEFITS for both young people/youth organisations and the EUSDR Governance that can stem from youth participation.

Against this background, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* does not present definite solutions, but rather offers a framework to capitalise on existing good practices, prioritise tasks and develop innovative approaches to youth participation.

The *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* primarily addresses youth initiatives and organisations that either are operated or represent young people between 15 and 29¹. Furthermore, the guidance paper addresses to young politicians, professionals active in project development and young researchers.

However, this does not exclude any other youth organisations or young people, who are interested in participating in the EU Danube Strategy and its actions.

Involving youth in cooperation in the Danube Region –

Why does it matter?

Why would young people benefit from participating in macro-regional cooperation?

With its comparatively low degree of formalisation, macro-regional strategies provide a platform for exchange and cooperation across sectors, administrative levels and across different generations. In doing so, macro-regional strategies have the potential to offer a playground to experiment with different approaches and policy innovations to enhance quality of life ranging from transport to environment, from culture and tourism to competitive economies, and from education and labour market to research.

So, how do young people and youth organisations benefit from the EU Strategy for the Danube Region?

Better access to resources to engage in projects that are embedded in a wider policy framework

The EU Danube Strategy sets out a framework of actions and targets to boost development for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Danube Region. Thereby, interregional projects and initiatives play a large role. Young people and youth organisations can benefit from better access to funding information, better access to policy network and experienced partners, and better access to information to develop projects and initiatives. Likewise, these projects gain wider recognition through the macro-regional platforms as well as create a potentially bigger impact through the embedding in the Danube Strategy. What is more, the Danube Strategy offers the opportunity to move young people's efforts out of a "youth bubble" and involve them in other EU policies, such as EU Cohesion Policy or Accession and Neighbourhood Policy.

Building capacities to engage in transnational decision-making processes

Approximately one third of the EU population are children or young people (0-29 years old). Hence, the perspective of young people and youth organisations that are representing them, play a significant role in the design of a strategy for regional development that aims at improving quality of life for the population it is addressing. The EU Danube Strategy has the potential to both provide a platform to engage into shaping concrete policies and their implementation. Thereby, the strategy is offering a framework to direct capacity building regarding the formulation of positions, lobbying, and exchanging with different stakeholders of the policy-making process.

¹ The age group definition follows the EC Communication on Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy, COM(2018) 269 final.

Contributing to a cultural shift towards more intergenerational cooperation

Being part of developing a design for youth participation in the EU Danube Strategy can be a chance to develop a good practice model that could be transferred to different policy frameworks. In any case, a functional *modus operandi* of youth participation in the EU Danube Strategy increases the capacities of young people and youth organisation (as well as the capacities of further stakeholders) to engage in intergenerational policy design. On a mid-term and long-term perspective, this might lead to a shift of political culture towards stronger intergenerational participation.

Why would the EU Strategy for the Danube Region benefit from involving young people?

The Action Plan of the EU Danube Strategy aims at contributing to enhance the involvement of civil society and youth in the development of the Danube Region. Hence, the participation of young people and youth organisations constitutes an essential element to ensure the sustainable design and implementation of the Danube Strategy that takes the needs and perspectives of young people into account.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region and its governance concretely benefits in the following ways:

Getting insights from affected stakeholder groups to design and implement tailor-made activities

Involving young people and their representing organisations in the design and implementation of the strategy contributes to better policies that are addressing and affecting youth. By offering young people an opportunity for participation, decision-makers get valuable insights into needs and challenges of young people. It is worth noting, that the more diversified groups of young people can be involved, the more accurate the picture gets. With children and young people making around a third of the EU's demographic, young people are representing a significant amount of inhabitants. The strategy's ability to involve actively young people can be a significant factor for the success of the strategy.

Opening up for new ideas for a stronger future orientation

A stronger emphasis on intergenerational cooperation creates innovative potential. Opening up for new stakeholders with different perspectives on the region's development introduces new ideas (from young people) to the Danube Strategy. This further broadens the innovative spectrum of development in the region. Furthermore, this allows for a strong orientation towards a mid- and long-term perspective of the strategy. This is particularly relevant in light of the long-term timeframe of development strategies that need to attract and mobilise stakeholders over a long period and are supposed to support innovation.

Improving mutual learning and stakeholder mobilisation

A key function of the EUSDR Governance is mobilising stakeholders to implement the strategy's actions and targets. This only works, if stakeholders understand how they can actually contribute and connect concrete activities to the strategic framework. Hence, involving young people and youth organisations contributes to mutual learning on how to engage in the strategy and implement its actions and targets. Furthermore, establishing meaningful participation supports young people to learn engaging in a European governance network and helps counteracting frustration in political participation. Additionally, involving youth triggers a learning experience for both, young people and youth organisations as well as the EUSDR Governance.

How to connect young people and the Danube Strategy?

The involvement of young people and youth organisations in the Danube Strategy requires suitable framework conditions for meaningful participation. This is not only relevant for the implementation of the EU Danube Strategy “on the ground”, but also in the interaction with Priority Areas, national Danube Strategy stakeholder platforms, and funding programmes.

In the course of a consultation process, the following factors proved to be decisive for meaningful participation: *Capacity building – Communication – Cooperation.*

Capacity building

The skill set forms the basis for active engagement of young people and youth organisations in the EU Danube Strategy. Hence, building capacities for participatory governance and cooperation is an essential step towards meaningful youth involvement. Against this background, the following elements need to be considered, when we work towards capacity building for young people and youth initiatives.

- Leadership & Empowerment
- Message framing
- Project development
- Networking
- Media/digital literacy



Potential measures to support the youth in the Danube Region would be mentoring programmes that enhance intergenerational exchange and provide guidance to young people. Furthermore, (online) training modules could be used to introduce young people to the EU Danube Strategy and how engage with the framework.

Likewise, representatives from the EUSDR Governance, including members from working groups and networks closely working with the EU Danube Strategy need to build capacities to engage in a meaningful dialogue with young people and youth organisations. Thereby, experiences from EUSDR stakeholders, who are already working with youth, as well as experiences from other macro-regional strategies could be helpful sources to develop respective capacities.

Communication

Communicating the EU Danube Strategy is essential to raise awareness of the perspectives in the region and show the entry points for active engagement to contribute to the strategy’s objectives and actions. Young people and youth organisations expect from the strategy’s communication to:

- get a clear understanding of the benefits of engaging in the EU Danube Strategy;
- learn what the EU Danube Strategy is and how its governance work;



- be involved in the communication (not only as a target group, but also as multipliers to have a better outreach to the youth).

Therefore, representatives from the EUSDR Governance should consider to launch informational campaigns that are addressing young people and youth organisations, establish platforms for communication and interaction with the youth that also create feedback loops from young people to the EUSDR Governance, and offer formats for young people to meet, share experiences and knowledge. In doing so, the EUSDR communication measures need to ensure accessibility to knowledge, information, networks and services that also include the youth.

Cooperation

Framework conditions and entry point for cooperation are prerequisites for young people and youth organisations to shape and produce actual results and outcomes that are contributing to the objectives and actions of the EU Danube Strategy. Thereby, it is important to reduce the barriers for young people in cooperation. This not only affects project development, but also access to stakeholders and potential partners as well as decision-making processes. Hence, the entry points for cooperation need to be supported in the following areas:



- decision-making processes (e.g.: in EUSDR Working Groups, Steering Groups, EUSDR Governance)
- project development
- cooperation networks & platforms

In view of supporting youth involvement in decision-making processes, transparent and accountable cooperation procedures and flat hierarchies that allow for interactions at eye-level are essential. Furthermore, establishing quota for young people in participatory platforms could be considered means to boost youth involvement. Stronger cooperation with young people through project development requires suitable funding with low bureaucratic hurdles. Particularly, macro-regional cooperation could be initiated through cross-border projects that young people can identify with and see tangible results. This can be further reinforced through network cooperation that grants access to competent partners, support intergenerational collaboration, build bridges also with local and regional authorities, and provide exchange of experiences on good and bad practices to reinforce mutual learning.

In defining the key factors for youth involvement, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* seeks to promote a process of pushing forward the participation of young people and youth organisations in the EU Danube Strategy. Furthermore, the *Guidance Paper for Youth Participation* shall support the prioritisation of activities to strengthen youth involvement.

In doing so, the *Guidance Paper on Youth Participation Day* is supposed to mark a starting point to:

- Increase the visibility of existing youth initiatives and youth organisations that are active in the Danube Region;
- Exchange knowledge and good practices on youth involvement within the Danube Region and beyond;

- Provide a platform to discuss approaches on how to engage youth in the EU Danube Strategy;
- Build capacities to empower young people and youth initiatives to participate in the EU Danube Strategy,
- Create new interfaces in the EU Danube Strategy to integrate further youth activities.

What do we do to connect young people with the Danube Strategy?

Dimensions of youth involvement	How can youth contribute to EUSDR?	What support can EUSDR provide for youth?
<p>D1: Danube Strategy Governance</p>	<p>Seeking actively cooperation with existing transnational platforms for youth cooperation in the region.</p> <p>Formulating a macro-regional youth perspective in view of the EU Danube Strategy and the Guidance Paper on Youth Participation to promote within the EUSDR Governance</p> <p>Engaging in the development and formulation of positions on youth (through active participation in the political decision-making through youth networks such as the Danube Youth Network, Young Bled Strategic Forum etc.)</p> <p>Revitalizing the Danube Parliamentarian Network.</p>	<p>Identifying and actively addressing youth initiatives and networks (with a cross-border/transnational dimension).</p> <p>Identifying possibly interfaces for youth involvement and activities within its working structure.</p> <p>Assisting youth initiatives and networks to use the macro-regional dimension, methodology and Strategy for its works.</p> <p>Involving young people through a structural dialogue with political decision-makers.</p> <p>Supporting young leaders, initiatives and projects in the Danube countries.</p>

	<p>Contacting national EUSDR representatives & platforms</p> <p>Cooperating with other MRS</p>	<p>Empowering young people and providing them with a “training ground” to access the EUSDR structures.</p> <p>Cooperating with other MRS</p>
D2: Cross-border Youth exchange in the Danube Region	<p>Actively participating and co-organizing national and Danube Participation Days in the EUSDR countries.</p>	<p>Assisting youth initiatives and networks to use the macro-regional dimension, methodology and Strategy for their work.</p> <p>Investing in the development of more youth exchanges and cross-border cooperations in the Danube Region.</p>
D3: Support and connect local youth initiatives	<p>Making use of the European Solidarity Corps and ERASMUS+ programmes to become part of the European family and to promote European values.</p>	<p>Establishing a micro-financing approach for small-scale granting of bottom-up youth initiatives.</p> <p>Connecting Youth with existing formats like the D-LAP and the Urban Platform etc., via online conferencing.</p>