The European Union Strategy for the Danube Region

The river Danube flows through ten countries, and on it lie four European capital cities. It is 3000 km long and its basin covers 20% of EU territory and around 115 million people.

This macroregion faces numerous specific challenges: big socioeconomic disparities, underdeveloped potential of the Danube waterway, a unique environment threatened by pollution – to name just a few. Furthermore, the integration of its eastern portion since 2004 and 2007 into the EU has brought a dramatic change, which must be assisted and reinforced. There is a need for a stronger than usual cooperation dimension and for an integrated cooperative response across borders.

This is why the European Council of 19 June 2009 formally asked the European Commission to prepare an EU Strategy for the Danube Region by the end of 2010.

Topics to be covered

At this stage, it is envisaged that the Strategy will be concentrated on the following four pillars and 11 priority areas:

A) Connecting the Danube Region
1) To improve mobility and intermodality
2) To encourage more sustainable energy
3) To promote culture and tourism and people-to-people contacts

B) Protecting the environment in the Danube Region
4) To restore and maintain water quality
5) To manage environmental risks
6) To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils

C) Building prosperity in the Danube Region
7) To develop the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies
8) To support the competitiveness of enterprises
9) To invest in people and skills

D) Strengthening the Danube Region
10) To step up institutional capacity and cooperation
11) To work together to tackle security and organised crime

We will also list examples of important projects, such as:
• Gas and electricity interconnections (missing TEN-E links)
• Danube floodplains restoration
• University and research link-ups
**Countries concerned**

14 countries in the Danube basin are concerned by the strategy: eight Member States (Germany [Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria]), Austria, Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania and six non-Member States (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine and Moldova).

**Where are we in the preparation of the strategy?**

During the first half of 2010, the Commission (with DG Regional Policy in charge of coordination of the Strategy) consulted people in the region. Taking their suggestions into account, it proposed a draft Communication and Action Plan that will be discussed by the relevant Commission services during the autumn. Both documents should be adopted by the Commission in December 2010 and ratified by the European Council during the first half of 2011.

**The next steps**

Once the documents have been adopted and ratified by the Commission and the European Council, the implementation of priority actions and projects can start. It is envisaged that each priority area’s implementation will be coordinated by one or two Member States (possibly in cooperation with a non-Member State).

For further information, please consult our website: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/danube/index_en.htm

**Territorial coverage of the Danube region for the Danube Region Strategy (regional level)**