

Declaration of the Danube Summit on 25th February 2010 in Budapest

We, the representatives of the Governments of Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia

Welcoming the decision of the European Council taken at its meeting on June 17-18, 2009, to invite the Commission to prepare an EU Strategy on the Danube region before the end of 2010;

Convinced that the Danube region, with its area of approx. 800.000 square kilometers and with a population of more than 80 million people, is to be developed into a European region of security, stability and prosperity;

Bearing in mind the outstanding significance of the Danube region for the whole continent and for the European Union, particularly for the Union's territorial cohesion;

Inspired by the joint and shared responsibility felt for the sustainable development of the Danube region driven by the European integration;

Determined to enhance the cooperation and understanding among countries and their citizens of the Danube region as well as the integration of the markets in the context of the EU policies, legal framework and principles;

Recognizing the importance of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the leading role of the European Union, especially of the Commission in facilitating the processes of cooperation in the Danube region;

Confident that enhanced targeted cooperation under the EU Strategy for the Danube region is of paramount importance for all countries and the citizens in the region by providing new and additional benefit in political, economic and cultural domains;

Acknowledging the importance of a common and integrated approach to the identification of the needs and the solutions, and matching them to available territorial resources; without prejudice to the negotiation on the future cohesion policy;

Reiterating that the Strategy is financially neutral and relies on a coordinated approach, synergetic effects and on a more efficient use of existing EU instruments and funds, as well as other existing resources and financial instruments;

Emphasizing that the Danube Region Strategy will serve the goal of increasing prosperity, security and peace for the peoples living there, especially through enhancing cross-border, trans-regional and trans-national cooperation and coordination;

Considering the strategic policy areas of energy, environmental and nature protection, transport and infrastructure, professional training and innovation, arts and cultural activities, as well as sustainable economic activity and tourism, food security/safety, economy, SME cooperation, R+D, migration, governance, sport, education and culture, labour, health and social affairs as key elements of the future EU Strategy for the Danube region;

Taking into account that the future Strategy has to be in line with and serve the values of the European Union, the fundamental objectives, principles and policies as enshrined in the Treaties; whereas the proper functioning of the single market backed by an efficient and effective transport and banking infrastructure is of paramount importance;

Welcoming the past efforts already made and the work done in the framework of Danube specific and other fora, institutions, organizations, networks;

Recognizing the importance and usefulness of the consensus obtained in the “Final Declaration of the Danube Summit on 6th May 2009 in Ulm”;

Reaffirm our readiness to

- create an attractive, secure and prosperous Danube region along our common values, principles and fundamental objectives;
- play an active role, engage public and private sectors and encourage all stakeholders, especially regional and local authorities, business and academic circles, and civil society in the successful preparation of the Strategy;
- take cooperative action aiming at finding common solutions to the challenges the region is facing *inter alia* in the field of environment, nature, transport infrastructure including inland navigation and railways routes, energy security, rural development, tourism, sport, good governance, food safety, migration, demography, climate changes, global crises, effects of market economic transition;
- use the Danube river basin for prudent and rational utilization of natural resources, while protecting human health, the nature and the environment;
- raise awareness among and encourage private and non-state actors and institutions of our countries in the economic, business, environmental, societal, academic / scientific, cultural and educational areas to make their contributions, actions in order to ensure an integrated approach based on all relevant sector interests and achievements;
- encourage the European Commission for furthering its proposal on the pillars of the Strategy by considering the suggestions of Member States;
- make all necessary efforts so that the Commission’s proposal on the EU Danube Region Strategy and the relevant Action Plan for its implementation is ready before the end of 2010 allowing its adoption by the European Council in the first half of 2011.

This Declaration is open for endorsement by the non-EU Member States of the EU Danube region strategy namely Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine. The list of the countries joining to the Declaration is attached in Annex 1. which makes an integral part of the present declaration.

Budapest, 25th February, 2010.